

HALF-A-DOZEN TRANSGRESSIONS.

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TO MY MOTHER.



Helene Guignard

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CONTENTS.

FRONTISPIECE.

					PAGE
HANDSOME ALEXIS	9
A MAN OF SENTIMENT	51
A MODERN ORPHEUS	73
THE SPIRIT AND THE FLESH	...	...	...	...	101
TRIAL BY FAITH	...	...	...	...	131
THE WOMAN IN THE HOUSE	...	...	...	...	143

Handsome Alexis.

CHAPTER I.

EVERYONE was agreed on one point. Unanimity on even this limited scale is rare; but no one disputed the assertion that Count Alexis Dimitri was not only the handsomest man in the Czar's own bodyguard, but also the handsomest man in all the Russias. His good looks, good fortune, and good humour were such as to earn for him the title of "Handsome Alexis." No one disputed his right to it. Occasionally, strangers on seeing him for the first time may have thought to themselves, "Well, I don't see what they make such a fuss about, he is good looking, certainly, but——"

There is much virtue in a "but," for, when they were introduced to him, they acquiesced in the admiring epithet. He was not only good looking, but he was no fool, as many good-looking men too often are. He had a delightful devil-may-care debonair way, which insidiously crept straight into a person's heart, and stayed there working the very mischief. His was a light, breezy manner, and earnest tongue, and a gay kind heart, brimming over with good intentions, and yet, somehow, they all combined to do more cruel

things, unconsciously, than Nero planned deliberately. Wary Russian dowagers gave him up as a bad job (*i.e.*, an "ineligible"), and warned their daughters against the fascinating Russian, and so successful were these same warnings that the daughters fell in love with him without knowing him. Each one thought that Fate had singled her out to be the *Una* to tame this delightfully wicked lion. How the *débutante's* heart fluttered when, at the balls at the Imperial Palace, the Count Alexis Dimitri, in a uniform glittering with a quarter of a million roubles' worth of precious stones, came to ask its owner for a dance. Oh! heedless Jupiter! Oh! luckless Semele! For, when the *débutante* went home, she would ruminate for the rest of the night and day over his looks, his words, and last, but not least, the gentle hand-squeeze. But he thought as little of kissing a woman's lips as he did of squeezing her hand—"if he had a chance," thinks the gentle reader. Sir or madame, this aristocratic scapegrace was always having chances. Moreover, he was a favourite, a very great favourite, of the Czar, who often clapped him on the shoulder with his autocratic hand most affectionately. For, as I have said before, Handsome Alexis had an awful way of stealing into your heart, and taking possession thereof, before you were conscious of the intrusion, and the Czar could not any more than any of his subjects resist the young Count. His Majesty's

affection for this wild young man was not without solid foundation, for it was the hand of Count Alexis Dimitri and his heart of courage that saved his Emperor from assassination. For this service the Czar presented him with a magnificent sword, blazing with enormous gems, on which was engraved, "To Handsome Alexis, from his friend the Czar." Count Dimitri valued this sword as much as King Arthur must have done his Excalibur, and he would say with pride "he could not be beaten with that sword in his hand." He always wore it.

As this is a truthful story of "Handsome Alexis" and no indiscriminating panegyric, some unpleasant truths must be told ere I launch out into the most stirring episode of his life.

He was given to fighting duels with weapons or fisticuffs (it mattered little to him which, so long as it was a fight) on the slightest provocation—sometimes out of sheer weariness of spirit he would provoke one; he was given terribly to gambling; he would have been given and taken to drink but that the latter never had any obnoxious effect upon him. He had neither kith nor kin to advise him, and so in the vortex of the great immoral society of St. Petersburg, Count Alexis Dimitri shone the most immoral of them all, and to cut a long matter short he was just as notorious for his gallantries as for his good looks. Grave diplomats warned their sons against him, as the

Russian dowagers did their daughters. But it was not much good. Sons took his example and waxed profligate, and daughters were not much better, I am afraid. And he—he remained the same amid the general ruin.

One evening at about eleven o'clock he found himself wandering in a quiet portion of the city. He had just left a lively party of gay (in every sense of the word) companions, had dismissed his carriage, and, to "cool his head," so he said, walked alone and unattended. There was method in this. For three hours he had been sitting in a heated atmosphere redolent of the fumes of tobacco; redolent of the fragrance of perfumes and flowers; redolent of the highly-spiced meats only known to Russians; redolent of conversation indescribable at its best. He was no fool, I said before; although he had been drinking hard, he was perfectly *compos mentis*, but he valued the effect of a starry Russian autumn night on a fevered brow. He had an appointment at twelve with a pretty countess. Countesses, however easy their virtue, had to be treated with respect. Vice was acceptable so long as it was elegant. Vice was nauseous when it became vulgar; so thought Handsome Alexis, and he always knew how to behave himself. That was one of his great charms.

As he strolled along a quiet street, after leaving his riotous companions, as sober as he ever was, he felt,

however, a trifle hot and excited. He walked slowly, his sword clanking ever beside him. The night was beautiful, and thousands of stars bedecked the deep blue sky, never so deep and blue anywhere as in Russia. A strange feeling crept into the young man's heart; he, always wild and turbulent, felt the power of mysterious nature, and a sigh, maybe of regret—who knows?—escaped him as he looked upwards and around him. Whilst in this frame of mind he heard a beautiful voice which came from a house whose casements were flung open, and, arresting his steps, he listened and heard these words:

“ Ici bas tous les lilas meurent,
Tous les chants des oiseaux sont courts,
Je rêve aux étés qui demeurent
Toujours !

Ici bas tous les hommes pleurent
Leurs amitiés, leurs amours,
Je rêve aux couples qui demeurent
Toujours ! ”

The voice was not only beautiful from an artistic point of view, but deeply sympathetic, and Alexis, deprived by his admiration of the power to applaud, lingered in the hopes of finding out who the singer was, and also what she was like. He was not disappointed, nor doomed to go away with an unsatisfied longing, as is usual with heroes. He was one of those peculiarly lucky individuals who usually wish and get what they wish.

A few minutes after the song had ceased, a young girl came to the casement and looked out. Now the nights in Russia are particularly light, and Alexis had no difficulty in discerning that the singer was decidedly pretty—nay, more than that, for she arrested the attention, not merely on account of the regularity of her small features, but because soul, so rare in most handsome people, was not wanting in her. A certain air of melancholy, not customary in one so young, added to rather than detracted from her beauty. Her eyes at once caught the figure of Count Dimitri lurking like a handsome Faust under the shadow of a tree. She did not retire. "Strange girl," thought Alexis—"most women would have run away and come back again; she doesn't stir."

"Mademoiselle," he said, coming forward and addressing the young lady in French, for all higher class Russians speak that language to perfection, "may I ask you to accept my humble respects and thanks for your beautiful song?"

"Monsieur, I was not aware I had a listener," replied the young girl, without the slightest confusion, in musical tones.

"Not only a listener, but an admirer," said Handsome Alexis. "The song, the manner of singing it, your voice, the words have impressed me deeply." He bowed, and, for once, felt he was speaking the candid truth.

A faint little smile hovered round her pretty mouth, and slowly died.

"It is pleasant to know one can please, monsieur; I never have the opportunity of singing to anyone," she replied, simply.

"Are you guarded by a dragon?" asked Count Alexis. "Such beauty and talent, however, require stern guardianship." Here habit asserted itself, and he spoke the language of the Court.

At this juncture an elderly woman approached the young girl and besought her to come in.

"Oh, leave me alone, Xenia," she replied, a little impatiently.

"But consider, dear child, it is not right that you should speak to a stranger. What if Aramedes saw you," remonstrated the other.

"I care not," responded the younger, defiantly. "He can see me, and welcome."

"Who is Aramedes?" thought Handsome Alexis, and he immediately put two and two together and made forty of it. In other words, he thought Aramedes and the fair young creature kept house together. Then he felt seized with a frantic desire to run his unknown rival through the body and run off with the lady. He meant to put his plan into execution.

"Who is it you are speaking to?" asked the older woman.

"Look for yourself, Nurse Xenia," cried the girl.

The nurse approached the window, and, as she caught the now smiling face of the young man outside, gasped out, "Mon Dieu! 'tis that reprobate! that destroyer of the innocent! Handsome Alexis! Come away, child, and talk to the devil rather!"

The girl never moved, and, with an ejaculation of despair, the nurse left the apartment.

"I must close the casement now, monsieur," the young girl said; "good night, and adieu."

"No, no, not adieu!" pleaded Count Dimitri. "I must see you again. To-morrow I will come at the same time. You will see me, mademoiselle?"

She nodded her head gravely, and began closing the casement in a very businesslike way, and Handsome Alexis walked slowly home. He did not keep his appointment with the pretty countess.

Next evening, punctual to the minute, Count Alexis was driven to the corner of the street, where he descended, and, dismissing his carriage, walked towards the house. As on the preceding night, the sound of the lovely voice greeted his ears; again he heard, as he stepped in front of the open casement:

"Ici bas tous les lilas meurent,
Tous les chants des oiseaux sont courts,
Je rêve aux étés qui demeurent
Toujours!"

"She must be mine!" he murmured, intoxicated with her voice.

" Ici bas tous les hommes pleurent
Leurs amitiés, leurs amours,
Je rêve aux couples qui demeurent
Toujours !"

The song was ended, and the singer came to the casement and greeted Alexis with a graceful bend. With courtly grace he responded to her salutation.

"She will be mine," he thought, followed up by, "like the others."

"Xenia, my old nurse, has warned me not to speak to you, but," she added, frankly, "I am not afraid of you or your reputation."

"Why," he answered, "you are as courageous as you are fair, and that's what I admire. Come now," he went on, coaxingly, approaching quite near to the casement, which was but a few feet from the ground—"would you not leave Achimades?"

"Aramedes," she corrected, in her grave, quiet way.

"Aramedes then, and come to a beautiful place where you will be as free as air, with jewels, and dresses, and horses, and plays every evening—aye, and people to sing to who will love and appreciate you?"

"But where is that place?" she questioned, looking at him with innocent eyes.

"That place is mine. I offer you my possessions and—myself."

"How strange you are," she exclaimed, not understanding. "I cannot leave Aramedes like that!"

"Has he such a hold over you then?" asked Handsome Alexis. "I will buy him over."

"Buy him!" she exclaimed, wonderingly. "My guardian cannot be bought to do anything, monsieur."

"Your guardian, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, my father and mother died when I was quite young, and left me in his charge. He is a sort of kinsman of my father's."

"Oh!"

The monosyllable was not much regarded in the abstract, but, *au fond*, there was a great deal more in it than met the ear. Alexis was rather disappointed to find that he had been mistaken, and vexed to think how nearly he had committed himself.

"What is your name?" he asked presently, quite sobered.

"Altha Arnott," she replied, quite readily. "Yours I already know from Xenia."

"Are you happy, mademoiselle?" he asked. "Do not consider the question impertinent, but, even from the little I have seen of you, I fear you are unhappy."

"No," she returned. "My guardian Aramedes, since I have grown up, has shut me up here, and pesters me with attentions. He wishes to marry me," she added, with a disdainful little laugh, "but for money which will come to me when I am of age."

"And you?"

"I hate him! I told Xenia I would speak to and

marry the first man who offered himself." This with a frankness and honesty and want of knowledge of the world—and courts—that stormed the young soldier's heart.

"Would you marry me, Mademoiselle Altha?"

"You!" she reiterated, with a laugh. "You marry no one, I know," with a wise shake of the small head—"besides, I am of the middle class, you a famous noble."

"Your nurse has painted me in very black colours," Alexis said, laughingly. "But tell me more of yourself; this unconventionality absolutely charms me. Where is this Aramedes, and who is he?"

"He is in his laboratory not far from here. He goes there every night after watching me all day. He is a chemist."

"May he invent some infernal explosive and blow himself to atoms!" Alexis exclaimed, fervently.

"He will not do that," said the young girl with quiet scorn.

"Why not? Isn't he able to go out of the world that way as any other?"

"No. He will live as long as nature allows him. He is a Greek," she answered in her grave way.

Here the door of the room in which the girl was opened hurriedly, and Count Dimitri saw the nurse enter.

"Come away, child!" she panted out in Russian.

"Aramedes is coming up the street, and you, Handsome Alexis, pray be gone. She would suffer for this. He would not spare her! For the love of the Holy Virgin, depart!"

The appeal was not lost on the young man, for he saw how dear his new acquaintance was to the heart of the elderly woman.

"*À demain!*" he cried, waving his hand and hurrying away.

She nodded and echoed, "*À demain.*" And that night Count Dimitri dreamed of a fair lady incarcerated in a dismal cell, saying mournfully those beautiful words of Sully Prudhomme:

"Ici bas tous les hommes pleurent
Leurs amitiés, leurs amours,
Je rêve aux couples qui demeurent
Toujours!"

And lo! when he woke in the morning his eyes were full of tears. The days, once so short to Handsome Alexis, seemed terribly long now. More than once he found himself complaining that the hours would not depart quicker than they did. He found solace neither in wine, nor in riding, nor in the society of the Court or other ladies. He stamped his foot in real Muscovite rage to think that even his latest amour, the pretty countess, had no more attraction for him than one of his scullions. What did it mean? Had it come to this, that the great and envied Count Alexis

Dimitri, favourite of the Czar, should waste his time thinking about a nobody who had a pretty face and a beautiful voice, it is true, but who lived up a back street, with probably a pedigree dating from the day before yesterday? It was sublime in its absurdity, and Handsome Alexis laughed peevishly at himself—but was prompt in his appearance that night underneath Altha Arnott's casement. It was wide open, and through it floated the sound of that voice which first charmed the ears of the young gallant. It was the same song, and, instead of being wearied of it, he felt more fascinated than ever. It seemed like a part of her. He thought of her and the song together. He could not dissociate one from the other. He did not wish to hear any other melody from her lips. When she came to the casement, she reached out her hand for the first time to him, and without any difficulty he grasped it in his own.

"I am so glad you are come, my friend," she said, joyously. "I have thought of you the whole day. If Aramedes had but known, I believe he would have killed me."

"You have not been absent from my thoughts, mademoiselle!" he replied. "You and your song have been with me even in my dreams."

"Is that so?" she asked, incredulously. "No, no; you say that because you think me like all the

other ladies you meet, and because—because you are Handsome Alexis.”

“I must tell you one thing,” he went on gravely, yet dreamily, as though he had not heard her—“I believe that if I were wrapped in my shroud and lay in my coffin dead, and you were to come and sing that song over the remains of what was Alexis Dimitri, I would rise and listen to you as well and strong as I am now. Nay, more, I should wish then, as I do now, to be alive that I might be with you, my unknown dear Altha Arnott, through a better life than the one I have led—to eternity !”

There may have been an Eastern exaggeration about this confession, but the Count no longer spoke in the language of the Court, and for once uttered the emotions of his heart.

“I ought not to listen to you,” faltered the young girl. “I have been warned that it is your nature, not your heart, that is false ; but,” she added, hurriedly and decidedly, “I love you—bad or good, false or true, I love you ! Were you to-day bereft of all honours, hopes, youth, and wealth, I would love you ! Were you friendless and forsaken, instead of being the Czar’s favourite and the pride of all the Russias, I would love you. Were you bent by illness or grief I would love you beyond the grave.”

Down from her pure and lustrous eyes, over her

beautiful pale cheeks, two tears rolled stealthily, as though ashamed to linger there. But that was all.

Her face wore its normal expression of sadness, and no storm of passion marred its tranquil beauty.

Alexis felt some strange emotion at his heart which he had never felt before. Altha's avowal touched him even to compassion; he had heard those confessions before with laughter in his heart, but it seemed different now. He cursed himself for causing one tear to dim the brightness of her eyes.

Suddenly he saw the street door open, and the form of Xenia present itself.

"The mischief is done now," she said, half surlily, half jestingly. "You had better come in the house, Handsome Alexis, and I will mount guard over my pretty bird Altha, so that Aramedes shall not find her with you. But mind—no pranks!"

Count Alexis needed no second invitation, but lightly and swiftly bounded up the stone steps into Altha Arnott's sitting-room.

The nurse eyed him askew. When she saw him take the tapered hand of her young charge and kiss it she closed the door on the two, softly saying to herself, "He is not so bad, this fellow, after all. He respects real goodness. I can see that."

Nurse Xenia was not aware, however, that two minutes afterwards, Count Alexis Dimitri and

Mademoiselle Altha Arnott exchanged vows of undying affection, and sealed them with a kiss.

To our Western ideas this sudden love no doubt appears very strange, but it is by no means infrequent in Russia for two young people to fall in love, and to marry each other within a week. Nor do these marriages turn out unhappier than those of long cogitation.

After that night Alexis was an admitted visitor, and the two lovers talked as only lovers can and ever will, but, as their affectionate converse has nothing to do with my story, it shall not be recorded here.

One night, after Altha had finished singing Alexis's favourite song, Xenia, who left them alone now, hurried into the room in a state of great trepidation.

"Go, go, Handsome Alexis, son of Dimitri, and never show thy face here again. Aramedes is coming, and we shall all suffer if he finds you here!"

"What care I?" cried Alexis, hotly, ceasing to speak French in his excitement. "Let him come! Altha goes with me. I shall kill him if he stops my way, or," he added with all the wildness and unrestraint of a true Muscovite, "I would rather kill thee, Altha, than that thou shouldst fall into his hands." And with his mother tongue there came back the Russian nature.

"No, no!" cried the young girl. "You must go. You must not meet him to-night. Blood will be shed,

I fear it, I know it, if you meet him. For the love of the bright angels, go, Alexis, if you love me!"

"When may I come back?" demanded Alexis, sullenly. Then, relapsing into French, "I would not go for all the bright angels that are in Heaven, but only for one on earth—for thee, Altha, and to save thy gentle heart from grief."

Just then Xenia hurried from the room.

"Haste! Haste!" implored Altha. "Go, my heart's love, it is for the best."

With a few words of devotion and a hurried embrace Alexis turned to the casement and escaped as lightly as a hind to the pebbles beneath, and then, as fast as his swift feet would carry him, he hurried homewards. As he sped along in his wild flight he missed a familiar clanking at his side. He had left the sword the Czar had given him at the house of his lady-love.



Hark! What terrible sound is that which cleaves the night air with awful significance? The birds are startled and take up the cry and echo it in the midnight air with the rush of a thousand wings until it is lost in space. The quiet street resounds with it—or seems to—long after it has come and gone, for it was a fearful cry, seeming to call upon heaven to witness a fell and horrid act. Windows are thrown open, heads white, black, grey and gold appear, and a hundred.

tongues are buzzing. What is it? What is happening? Men and women huddle on their clothes and rush into the street; some with lights and some without, falling over and under each other in a wild confusion impossible to describe. This does not help matters, rather is the confusion more confounded, and when the Commissary of Police arrives with two or three officers, they are at a loss to understand if it is a Nihilist outrage or only a murder.

"Everyone to his and her home!" Monsieur le Commissaire calls out in his stentorian voice. And these Russians know better than to disobey. They all hurry indoors with celerity.

But the cry? When all has been restored to its pristine tranquillity, the police official and his officers notice a man standing at his casement gesticulating in the wildness of his despair, calling out in disjointed phrases, "For the love of God and the Holy Virgin, come here; a cruel, cruel deed has been perpetrated."

The police and his officials entered the man's house, for the street door was open, and without delay enter the room.

"See here! See here, gentlemen!" cried the stranger, in a violent outburst of grief. "My ward, my ward, dear to my heart as my own child, has been done to death by a cruel hand!"

The Commissary of Police kneels down on the ground beside the apparently lifeless form of Altha

Arnott. Inured as the man is to all sorts of horrible experiences, he cannot restrain an expression of horror as he contemplates the manner of the crime and on what a beautiful creature committed.

Her life-blood was ebbing away, and the ground crimson with the pure stream.

"She has been stabbed in the back!" one of the officials exclaimed.

"A cowardly act!" warmly cried the youngest of the men. "Poor girl."

"Has someone gone for a surgeon?" asked the Commissary deliberately, frowning at the young man. Pity was unprofessional.

The man of the house nodded his head. He was too overwhelmed to speak. Xenia had gone for one.

"Have you any idea who did this?" asked the Commissary again.

"She has been receiving visits, I believe, in my absence."

"Hold! What have we here?" cried out another of the officials, and he picked up a blood-stained sword.

He held up the weapon, and from the glittering blade there rolled drops of blood. The hilt of the sword glistened and coruscated in the light with the sparkle of many coloured gems, and on it was inscribed—

"To Handsome Alexis, from his friend the Czar."

"Count Dimitri's work!" observed the Commissary, pursing his lips, and, with thoughtful mien and critical eye, watching the precious blood as it trickled from the sword's point to the floor.

CHAPTER II.

The Tribunal of Justice, with judges clad in imposing robes, with grave and solemn demeanour, was sitting. All Russia was hushed in breathless excitement, for a case of more than ordinary importance was to be tried. By order of the Czar, no one of the public was admitted to this trial, and he, Autocrat and Ruler, sat on a dais above the judges, intending to inform himself to the utmost of his ability, so that no verdict should be passed without his full knowledge of the facts. On a table, covered with crimson velvet, in front of the Czar, was a sword, stained and tarnished as to the Damascus steel, glittering and brilliant as to the gems on the hilt. What mockery it was to the heart of Alexis as he looked at the weapon from a seat below the judges. The jewels were full of warmth and fire, thought he, and she, precious above all this vanity and show, was cold and dead. He felt like one who dreams. He could scarcely yet realise that he was arraigned before a tribunal for murdering—murdering her. He did not care for anything that happened now.

He only knew that she was dead, and this trial was nothing compared to that. He had no inclination to live, since the only creature his wayward and spoiled heart had fondly attached itself to was taken. He wondered how she looked. Pale and beautiful, he had no doubt, and, ah, yes! they must have put white flowers, as fair and taintless as herself, around her and in her hands. And, that song he loved so much, she would sing to the angels, and he would never meet her there. Alexis Count Dimitri thought this and much more. To the judges and witnesses, he was merely Handsome Alexis the libertine, given over to recklessness of every kind.

The first witness called was Simon Aramedes. Born in Athens, resident in St. Petersburg for the last twelve years. Chemist by trade. Guardian of Altha Arnott.

One of the judges : "State what you know of this case."

Simon Aramedes (a portly Greek, with a frank open face, exhibiting every sign of emotion, evidently unable to repress his feelings) : "Altha Arnott was committed to my care when she was but seven years of age by her dying father. I was a second cousin. True to the trust imposed upon me, I brought her up, with the assistance of a good nurse and efficient masters, and away from every baneful influence. So great was my care of her that even when she budded

into beauty and cleverness of an extraordinary nature, I kept her secluded from the world." (A sob.)

The Czar (from his dais above the judges): "A treasure too closely kept tempts thieves the most. You did wrong, Aramedes. She should have associated with girls of her own age."

Aramedes (with a profound obeisance, his eyes streaming with tears): "Sire, too late I know the truth of your words. She grew up full of grace and beauty. I heard from a neighbour, Vera Platoff by name, that, during my absence in the evening, for two months past, my charge was in the habit of receiving the visits of a young man, whom I afterwards learned to be no other than the notorious Count Dimitri. I watched, and found out that her statement was too true. It had already begun to be the talk of the street. One night I came in the room where she invariably sat, and found her, whom I had left a few hours before full of life and loveliness, dead, O Czar! with the sword of Alexis driven through her body!"

One of the judges: "Call Vera Platoff. Stand down, Aramedes."

Usher: "Vera Platoff!"

A voice: "Here!"

Vera Platoff, a dried up looking personage of fifty, yellow and cadaverous as a tempest-blown autumn leaf, appears before the judges.

First Judge: "What have you seen of this case?"

Vera Platoff: "Sitting at my casement every evening nearly opposite to the house of Aramedes, I saw a young man visit there in Aramedes' absence. I knew it was wrong. More than once I saw Altha Arnott and Count Dimitri kissing each other."

One of the judges: "How do you know it was the Count Dimitri?"

Vera Platoff (with an acid smile): "There is no mistaking Handsome Alexis, my lord."

The Czar (thoughtfully): "It was very wrong of them."

Vera Platoff (subserviently and cringing): "So we all thought, your Majesty, very wicked, very wrong."

The Czar (frowning): "Very wrong of them—to keep the blinds up! Go, woman!"

This witness leaves in great fear and trepidation, and determines to quit her house as soon as possible.

Dr. Theodore Lessing was next called. A tallish man, with stooping shoulders, a lion-like shaggy head, grey beard and moustaches, stands before the judges with folded arms. His manner is Teutonic, harsh and abrupt.

First Judge: "Kindly state what you know of this case, Dr. Lessing."

Dr. Lessing is an eminent German doctor, and he is treated with respect accordingly. Has lived in St. Petersburg for many years.

Dr. Lessing (his penetrating eyes fixing themselves

on his interlocutor, as though he would consider him a good subject for dissection): "Two weeks ago I was called in late at night, by a woman called Xenia, to the house of one Aramedes. A young girl had been stabbed in the back. I found the wound a deep and extremely dangerous one. She had lost much blood, and was in a dying condition. Had her carried to my own house——"

One of the judges (interrupting): "Pardon me, Dr. Lessing. Was not that an anomaly?"

Dr. Lessing (abruptly): "My greatest cures have been effected by anomalies. The case interested me. The wound had been inflicted by a sword whose ownership is unmistakable throughout Russia."

First Judge: "Can the young girl's depositions be taken?"

Dr. Lessing (with withering sarcasm): "Certainly, if you would kill her at once. She has high fever. If she lives at all, which I doubt, she will be a cripple for life."

Here Count Dimitri, who had been listening eagerly to the doctor's evidence, ejaculated, "She lives! Oh, thank God! thank God!"

Dr. Lessing (curtly): "You mean thanks to me, and none to yourself, Handsome Alexis."

The nurse Xenia was the next witness. She stated that she had left her young mistress alone and well with the Count, and when next she saw her the

Count had gone and her charge lay on the ground stabbed by his sword. The nurse Xenia had heard the Count say, "I would rather kill you myself now than you should fall into his hands."

Here the Czar glanced at his favourite with undisguised sorrow and reproach in his face, and then he placed his hand before his eyes.

The valets of Count Dimitri, an old and a young man, were summoned. With evident hesitation and reluctance they stated that they had assisted their master to undress on that eventful night; that his clothes were disordered; that his linen was wet with perspiration. When he came into his room he had all the appearance of having run for his very life. He was out of breath and panting. These items were literally dragged from the domestics, for they loved their master, especially the elder. As these witnesses were on the point of leaving, the Czar motioned them to remain.

"I wish to ask one question," he said slowly, as though wrestling with himself. "Did Count Alexis Dimitri return to the palace with—his sword?"

The valets looked at the monarch, and he looked at them—the mighty autocrat and the humble plebeian for once, on this side of the grave, met on an equal footing, for mercy was paramount in their hearts. But the cold truth had to be uttered.

"Answer for me, boy," cried the elder of the two

men. "I nursed him when he was a child, and his father brought him to me to hold upon my knee. Oh! little father," he added brokenly, falling on his knees before the feet of the Czar, "you would not have an old servant swear away the life of a beloved master"—and the tears streamed from his old eyes. Silence reigned supreme. The ticking of an old timepiece was the only sound that broke the intense stillness.

Presently the Czar, with his hand still before his eyes, bent and whispered to the first Judge, and the latter said, in grave and sonorous tones, "His Imperial Majesty the Czar respects the affection of an old serf for the master who has treated him well. You are both at liberty to leave."

The two valets bowed themselves out, and the first Judge continued gravely, "Alexis Count Dimitri, you did not return to the palace with your sword on the night of the attempted murder?"

Handsome Alexis made no answer. A sullen pride reigned within his breast. They might kill him now, he would not deign to offer a word to save or exculpate himself, and, when the Head of the Police appeared before the judges with some papers in his hand, Count Dimitri smiled disdainfully. He knew well what those papers meant. They were items of information especially retained and kept by the secret police against people brought before the Tribunal of Justice. These papers were handed to the Chief Judge.

"Alexis Count Dimitri," he observed, reading from one of the papers, "in the year 18—, in the month of October, and on the fifth day, you left Paris, where you had been for three years with your tutor, and came to reside at St. Petersburg, in the palace in which your ancestors have dwelt for many generations."

Alexis Count Dimitri bowed slightly. He had in his wild head a lurking respect for some of his ancestors. The men had mostly been as brave as Spartans: the women (also mostly) as chaste as Lucretias. He bowed to their memory.

"Alexis Count Dimitri," proceeded the Judge, "you no sooner took up your residence in this country than your reckless extravagances began. You were in this city two days when you assaulted the watch who tried to prevent you embracing a holy sister when returning from watching at a sick bed." Alexis remembered the item. She was pretty—the holy sister—and he did not know Altha then. "On the third day you killed a man in a duel." Alexis shrugged his shoulders. "It was a fair fight," he said, laconically. "On the fifth day," the Judge continued, "you severely beat a man for insulting, so you said, a beggar, as though a beggar could be insulted." This parenthetically. "In November, on the third day, in driving a troika through the city, you cut the traces, and let them gallop on whilst you and a brazen woman of the people sat laughing in your

seats. On November 24th you were reported to have hidden a Nihilist in your cellars, and to have assisted in his escape from St. Petersburg. In December, the third day of the month, you disappeared for some weeks with Madame la Comtesse de Mandeville, whose husband is searching for her to this day."

Alexis remembered this with an emotion akin to sorrow. And yet it had been her fault; she followed him. What was he to do?

"You returned, she never did," the Judge went on. "She poisoned herself. This is known only to the police."

"I cannot be held responsible for the reckless impulses of a passionate woman!" cried Alexis.

"It is known to the police," continued the Judge, in an inexorable way, "that the Comtesse killed herself because you deserted her."

Alexis shrugged his shoulders, but did not inform his accuser that the lady in question had taken it upon herself, so jealous was she, to threaten his life almost daily. But he minded most the scenes and disturbance she had created. They it was that had induced him to leave her.

"After two months' absence," the Chief Judge pursued, referring to his papers, "you and some companions—you the ringleader and instigator—laid wagers as to how many bumpers of vodka a man could drink. From the effects of this disgraceful wager the

man died. On the eighth of March in the same year"—here the Judge faltered, and turned pale.

Alexis looked straight before him, not moving a muscle, head erect, and shoulders back, with the perfect carriage of a well-trained soldier.

"On the eighth of March, 18—," interposed the Czar, in a strange voice, having hitherto listened in silence to the accusations, "Count Dimitri, at the imminent risk of his own life, saved that of his Emperor." The last word was uttered in a whisper. The recollections of that day moved the Potentate greatly. So much so that he was compelled to rise from his dais, and make for the door of the court, through which he disappeared, waving his attendants back, and bowed by sorrow.

But judges and Czar, Czar and judges, could draw but one conclusion from the damning circumstantiality of the evidence, and Count Alexis Dimitri, Handsome Alexis, at once the joy and terror of all the Russias, favourite of the mighty Despot himself, was convicted of the attempted murder of Altha Arnott, and sentenced to eight years of living death in the Siberian mines.

"I knew he would come to no good end," remarked the Russian dowagers amongst themselves.

"Oh! the pity of it!" sighed the daughters of St. Petersburg.

"D——d fool!" cried the men, and down their eager throats the champagne swept away the remembrance of poor Alexis's many redeeming qualities.

CHAPTER III.

Four years passed swiftly to the old, and slowly to the young. With heavy steps to the sad at heart, with gentle tread to the joyous. Four years had come and gone, and Alexis was almost forgotten, except by one who lived, and still remembered, and loved and mourned. Altha Arnott lived. The clever and brusque Doctor Theodore Lessing had nursed her through a terrible fever; the sword wound had healed, but left the poor child bent and crippled. The doctor had no wife or children, and so perhaps it was not so strange, seeing that his patient had an unconquerable aversion to her guardian, Aramedes, to whose house she never returned, that he adopted her as his daughter, and she and Xenia kept house for him. The doctor had never cared a straw for his home; he had even hated it. But now all was changed. His patients visited, he looked forward with an affectionate pleasure, quite strange to his heart, to his coming home. For was not his "little daughter," as he called Altha, always waiting for him?—waiting for him with a smile of welcome. It puzzled him, too (although he was a learned man), to find his linen was not frayed as it used to be, and that buttons were not missing as they used to be, that his clothes were brushed as they used never to be, and his house, once a wilderness, was kept neat and in perfect order. It surprised him again—although he

was a deep thinker, and knew most things—to find he liked to linger over his evening meal with Altha opposite him. The evening meal used to be the doctor's pet abomination. Now he would condescend to all sorts of subterfuges to draw it out to greater length.

"Little daughter," he said one night, "it appears to me that you are getting paler and thinner—aye, and much sadder too, although you smile at me as ever."

"You mistake, dearest and kindest of friends," answered Altha, hastily. "I am always the same. I feel as well as ever; perhaps," she added, "it is my idle life that makes me appear different to you."

The doctor shook his head as a lion would his mane.

"You do not sing any more," he continued. "You scarcely eat, and Xenia tells me you sleep but little. Child! child! will you never forget the past? You are too young to think and suffer so much."

"Beloved friend," answered Altha, kneeling by the good doctor's side and looking up into his face with her beautiful melancholy eyes, "grief and sorrow do not spare youth any more than they do age. I can never forget. In the darkness of the night, in the brightness of the day, when the stars are out, when the flowers bloom, in all and everything I can see him—Alexis Dimitri—suffering, suffering, suffering for a crime of which he was never guilty! I cannot forget!"

The doctor cleared his throat—it had grown uncommonly husky—and was silent for awhile.

“But you are fading, little daughter, like a flower in the chilly wind. I cannot stand mutely by and see that!”

“If it were not for you,” replied Altha, calmly, “I would wish to be at rest, away from this busy world, in every sound of which is something of my lost Alexis.”

At this moment there was a hasty tap at the door, and, receiving permission to enter, a young priest hurried in.

“Dr. Lessing! in the name of the Holy Virgin, come with me at once; the Reverend Father Superior is raving with delirium,” cried the stranger.

The doctor needed no second invitation, but, with a hurried kiss on Altha’s forehead, walked out with the priest.

Three hours elapsed ere the doctor returned. When he did it was with a noiseless step that he ascended the stairs leading to Altha’s room. He listened for a moment outside the door. She was awake, and softly humming to herself:

“Ici bas tous les hommes pleurent
Leurs amitiés, leurs amours,
Je rêve aux couples qui demeurent
Toujours!”

The doctor marvelled. He had not heard her sing

for many a long day. It was the song, too, he recollected, she had sung so often in her fever years ago. He knocked.

"Are you awake and up, little daughter?" he asked.

"Come in, friend of friends, I am up!" she answered.

He entered. She was brushing her tresses, and they were so long that they covered that bend in her back.

"How pale and strange you look!" she cried, noticing a change in him. "Are you ill?"

"No, little daughter, sit down. I have to tell you something."

She seated herself, wonderingly.

"Are you strong," observed the Doctor, looking at the fragile figure before him—"strong enough to listen to some strange news, think you?"

Her breath came short and quick. She put her long, slender fingers on her breast as though to repress more emotion.

"No fainting—no hysterics, nor anything of the kind," continued the Doctor.

She shook her head, and smiled gently and sadly.

Ah, well! the doctor knew that beneath that slender form dwelt the strongest spirit of patience and endurance.

"Give me your hand, dearest little daughter."

She rose and knelt by his side, and clasped his horny, large hands in hers.

"When I was called out to-night," the Doctor said, "I went to the cloister of St. Suplice, and there I was shown into one of the cells where the Reverend Father Superior lay in delirium. It appears, from what I heard from the priest who fetched me, that for the last two nights the Father had been repeating and repeating a confession made to him two years ago by a dying sinner. It is also evident to me as a doctor that this confession has been the means of turning the unhappy Superior's brain. Are you listening, my little daughter?"

"My heart, my very heart, is listening," she answered in deep and earnest tones.

"The confession is—and the Holy Father repeated it in my hearing at least a dozen times—that Count Alexis Dimitri is suffering—in—Siberia—for—the crime—which—Aramedes the Greek—is guilty of—committing. Are you listening?"

"O God! O God! accept the thanks of a sufferer," she cried. "Go on, go on, dear, kind friend, angel on earth sent by heaven to help me."

She kissed the horny hand in a wild outburst of gratitude, and then was quiet. Her impressive Russian nature, which had been subdued by years of pain and grief, had burst out momentarily again.

"The Holy Father, in repeating the confession

of that glib scoundrel Aramedes," the Doctor continued, "retailed it word for word. The Head of the Police has taken down the deposition, and to-morrow it will be before the Tribunal who tried Handsome Alexis."

The doctor did not tell Altha that the Holy Father had vividly painted the scene of the attempted murder. How Aramedes had watched Count Dimitri leap from the open casement; how Altha, in looking out after her flying lover, had been stabbed in the back by her guardian, who found Alexis's sword on the table.

The next day the Tribunal of Justice, by special fiat of the Czar, sat to enquire into the judgment passed on Count Alexis Dimitri some years. Aramedes, who, despite his severe illness, did not die, but continued his profitable business as chemist, found himself confronted by that uncomfortable personage the Head of the Police, with a warrant for his arrest. Seeing the game was up, he confessed that, provoked by Altha's refusal to marry him, he attempted to murder her, so that the blame might be attached to her lover, and, his confession ended, he profited by a moment's inattention on the part of the officials, and poisoned himself.

* * *

So many abler pens than mine have described the horrors and terrors of the mines of Siberia that I will not attempt to do so, merely observing that, as on the entry to Dante's Inferno, there should be written

on its perpetual ice, "Lasciate ogni Speranza voi che entrate." To this country of terrorism and horrors, the greater portion of which lies within the limits of the frozen zone, and which is almost entirely excluded from all communication with the civilised and improved parts of the world, two travellers journeyed with a "Free pardon" from the Czar. The two travellers were the doctor and Altha. Three returned after some time had elapsed, and the third was number 1,003, otherwise Count Alexis Dimitri. But how changed! how changed! When they arrived at St. Petersburg, Dr. Lessing and Altha accompanied him to his palace, where, as he crossed the threshold, his old servants waited to greet him. But as he entered, he that had left it so bright and young and debonair, they could not refrain from an outburst of poignant grief, the intensity of which is only known to the Slav race. His once brown hair had become white as snow; his form, once as straight and lithe as a willow-wand, was bent and bowed like that of an old man; but worse, worse than all—and that which Altha saw with a fast breaking heart—his mind was dead. He knew nothing, and recognised no one, himself least of all. He was 1,003. Merely a number, nothing more.

He was led into one of his sumptuous apartments, and there he sank inertly into a divan. The doctor stood beside him, and Altha sat near, looking with her

soul in her eyes, full of sympathy, yet brave and tearless.

"My good, courageous little daughter," said the Doctor, "you have gone through so much, and have not once complained. Have courage yet. I have hopes that he will recover his reason."

"Let me stay with him," she said, "I will nurse him night and day untiringly. Ah!"—she added, with a hoarse sob—"God must in the end reward me and make him well, even if I die."

"My child, what would the world say," the Doctor gravely asked, "if you stayed with him?"

"The world is nothing to me," the woman said. "Here is my world in this sad, broken man. Here are my hopes and joys and sorrows in this wronged fellow creature. He is my first love and my last; the world and its sayings are nothing to me. He is all and everything."

The passionate energy of these words aroused the phantom on the divan.

"Who speaks in that voice that I heard once in a dream?" he asked, faintly.

"It is Altha Arnott!" she cried, running to him with outstretched arms. "One who loved you long ago, who loves you now. Speak to me one word. Say that you know me!"

The shadow of Handsome Alexis shook its white head.

"Alas! Alas! I know you not," he answered, tremblingly. "I once knew one with a voice like yours—but she is dead! dead! dead!"

The doctor nodded his head encouragingly.

"Go on, little daughter, go on. He is better," he said, sagely.

Altha Arnott heard and saw nothing but the broken-down figure on the divan. Her heart seemed full to bursting, and she strode up and down the apartment, full of wild energy and despair. Suddenly she stopped as she espied a piano at the end of the room. She opened it and sat down, running her deft fingers over the keys. Through the mists of years she remembered Alexis—when, alas! he was Handsome Alexis—once saying:

"I believe that if I were wrapped in my shroud and lay in my coffin, were you to come and sing that song over the remains of that which once was Alexis Dimitri, I would rise and listen to you well and strong."

She sang that song, at first tremblingly, and then with the matured power of one who had loved and suffered.

"Ici bas tous les lilas meurent,
Tous les chants des oiseaux sont courts,
Je rêve aux étés qui demeurent
Toujours !

Ici bas tous les hommes pleurent
Leurs amitiés, leurs amours,
Je rêve aux couples qui demeurent
Toujours !”

The last word died away in a sob. She had sung that song as she never had done in the days when her heart had been untried, and then she quietly hid her face, and only the convulsive heaving of her bosom showed how deeply moved she was. But the doctor was wide awake and open eyed, and saw another sight. The inert figure on the sofa, when the song began, seemed to resume life and spirit. The eyes became full of light, at first of wonder, then of sorrow, then of love ; and when the song was ended, Dr. Theodore Lessing saw what Altha Arnott could not, Alexis Count Dimitri, handsome no longer it is true, but with reason and affection unutterable, kneeling at the feet of his little daughter.

“ Altha !”

“ Alexis !”

“ You have called me from the grave,” he cried, kneeling at her feet. “ I remember all, dear heart. But what ghost have you summoned unto yourself,” he added, sadly. “ ’Tis only the shadow of the Alexis you once knew, and you are still beautiful, Altha !”

“ No, no, no !” she exclaimed, rising from her seat, speaking in a voice whose enthusiasm and fervour it would be impossible to describe. “ See here ! see

here, Alexis; oh, my beloved, I am a cripple!" And her eyes beamed with an inspired light, as in her great love she wished to lessen herself in his estimation. A strange incident defied her intentions, however. Her dark hair, carelessly pinned up in travelling, fell down like a mantle over her poor back, hiding her deformity from his sight. Dr. Theodore Lessing gulped down a big lump that rose in his throat, and hurried out of the room, thinking that, after all, his science could never have worked so effective a cure on that diseased mind as did a woman who loved much.

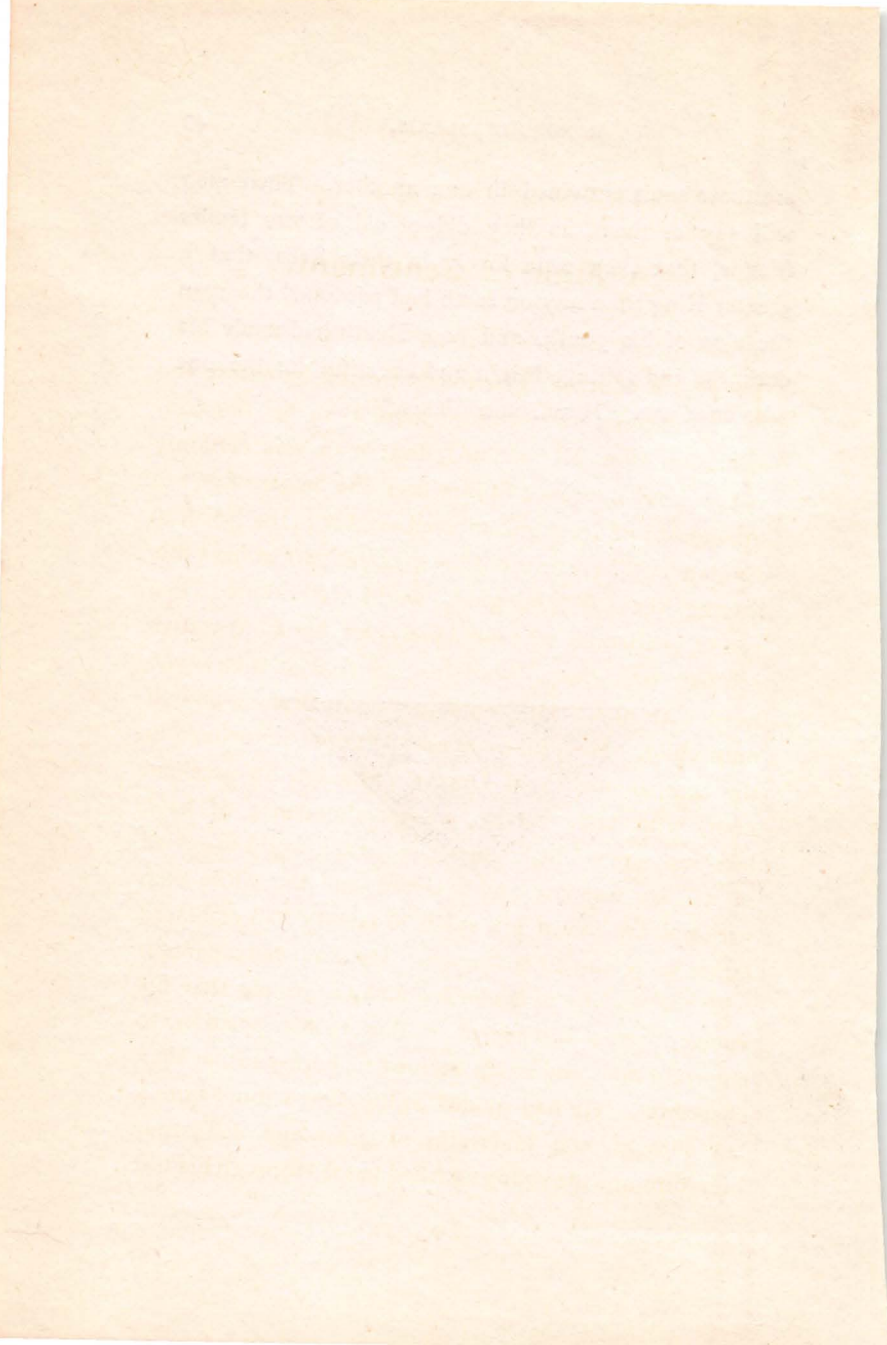


There are two people living in St. Petersburg whom the Czar delights to honour above all others. These two are together always, and, being so, are content. She is a constant and untiring nurse; he infirm and feeble in health, but uncomplaining, sensible, and happy. Scandal assails them not with her poisoned tongue, for suffering and sorrow, of no common order, have placed them far beyond it. Their friendship, higher, nobler than earthly love and passion, is like the beautiful shadows of evening, growing till life and light have passed away.

The day is not far distant now when sleep must encompass his eyes, and close them for ever on the sorrows and injustice of the world. It needs no seer to foreshow that she will follow him soon, so strongly

are these souls entwined in one another. Then men will say of them, as they did of old of two tender friends, that they were lovely in their lives, that a greater King than any on earth had pardoned the man the sins of his youth, and how Death had made his darkness and solitude bright and beautiful for the one who once was "Handsome Alexis."





A Man of Sentiment.

IF ever a man was generously treated by nature and by fortune, and received more than his due consideration from all mankind, that man was certainly young Lord Laurence Stillingfleet, the owner of one of the oldest and least encumbered estates in the North of England. There he spent the greatest part of his time, leaving the gay and giddy world well alone. The young gentleman was not lonely, for his comparative solitude was shared with his old college tutor, who lived with him. His lordship was an orphan, and an only child. He possessed an additional advantage in the companionship of Doctor Cramslot, an excellent man, with just, maybe, a superabundance of book learning, and too little knowledge of the world to get on in it. He was shy and reserved, and the while men with not an iota of his splendid talents had embraced fame, he remained unknown. He was quite content with the society of his books, and the people that his young patron considered it due to his position to entertain now and again seemed to harass rather than cheer him. He had guided Stillingfleet's mind from a lad through the labyrinths of great and dangerous literature, and the young man had passed through his test

by book bravely, and from a chrysalis state of practicality his heart had developed into a brightly-coloured butterfly of sentiment. He was strongly inclined to see the poetry and not the prose of things, so it came about that his ideas, full of the spiritual and non-sensual world, made his soul beautiful and his face bright with the light of a higher intelligence. The worthy doctor sometimes ruminated on the loveliness and power of youth while looking at his pupil, and became mournful when he thought how those Goths and Vandals, Time and Experience, would strip him of them as Greece was robbed of her beautiful temples and her gods.

Dr. Cramslot had a rare gift of quotation, and practised it on all possible and impossible occasions ; in fact, it was his weakness, and an irrepressible one.

"*Teneris, heu ! lubric moribus ætas,*" broke from him on one occasion. The lapse was at least appropriate then, for his lordship had just informed him that he had invited a party of actors and actresses to dine with him that evening. The mummers in question had come from London, and were playing with "conspicuous success" not far from that part of the country where my lord's mansion was situated. The proposed dinner party caused the doctor no little surprise ; he knew his pupil's dislike of such things, and expressed himself accordingly.

"No one expects this from you," he began.

"It is a case of the unexpected always happening.

There is a young girl in the company whose face I like," candidly explained Stillingfleet. "I want to see it again."

He wanted to see the face and admire it. He gave no thought to the person. "*Prudens in flammam ne manum injicio*," murmured the Doctor, who objected to the feminine sex in its entirety, and always liked to counsel his young Faust like a good-natured Mephisto. "Doctor," laughed Lord Laurence, "you are too fond of philosophy to care for humanity."

"What makes you dislike dinners, I mean the ones that men give?" cried his mentor, with childlike persistence. "I can't make it out," and he looked up inquiringly, did the rosy little doctor, through his glasses.

The worthy man with all his knowledge was as a simple child, and the smallest thing interested him. He often wondered why his pupil absented himself from masculine festivities, and he quite looked forward to finding out the reason.

His lordship rose from where he was sitting, and paced the room rather nervously.

"I don't mind the men," he began, hesitatingly, "but I do hate their after-dinner stories. My whole nature revolts when I am forced to listen to such things." His honest manly face flushed crimson, and he glared indignantly at the doctor, who stood stock-still in front of him.

“Men never meet together but they emulate the vilest parts of the Decameron in their conversation. In the name of all that is decent, why should men parade their bestiality merely because they herd together and have a good meal?”

My lord's counsellor and friend said nothing. The young man's vehemence even made him forget to illustrate it by a quotation.

His lordship was “fancy free,” though four years before he had been engaged to the only woman he ever would have married.

His lady-love was a beautiful young Indian princess; her mother was an Englishwoman, and her father a rajah. Her first season a series of triumphs, and the conquest of Lord Stillingfleet. That love was returned with all the poetry of an Eastern and the culture of a Western heart. But the fair flower was doomed. The seeds of consumption were sown on the day of her first presentation at Court on a bleak day in March. Men and women buzzed in admiration round her like bees over a flower, intoxicated by her Eastern loveliness, while the unseen hand of Death touched her, and soon claimed her as his own. Since then Lord Stillingfleet's heart had become a beautiful frame which only held the portrait of his lost love.

It was the night of the theatrical party, and Lord Stillingfleet sat at the top of the table, with the M.P. for the county, Mr. Spry, his *vis-à-vis*.

Dr. Cramslot declined to take the latter place, as he wished to avoid observation as much as possible.

Mr. Spry's powers of entertainment were not brilliant. He seldom spoke, but listened eloquently in all languages.

Smiling with that gentleman was an art. For different occasions he had different stereotyped smiles. There was the smile cordial, the smile freezing, the smile condescending, the smile reverential, the smile for the lobby, the smile for the drawing-room, the smile for the green room, and the smile general, which might mean a great deal or just nothing at all. They were all excellent in their way, and really did him infinite credit.

Lord Stillingfleet had two pretty creatures on either side of him, one arrayed in white, the other in pink.

"Stillingfleet," remarked the M.P., "you don't seem to be in the best of spirits. What's the matter?"

"*Non*," said his neighbour, Mdlle. Coralie de la Robecourt, as she twirled the stem of a wineglass with her dainty fingers. "*Il est vraiment triste*."

Two of those fingers were worth a great deal, as Mr. Spry knew very well. What would Mrs. Spry have said? Perhaps that highly-respected female member of society paid her own little oblations at the shrine of Venus. Who knows?

Yet both of them were ready to swear for each

other's continency when they were apart. It's a little way they have in society.

"They say his lordship is in love," murmured the young lady in pink.

She was a pretty creature, this one, with that coloured hair which is neither gold, brown, nor black, but partakes of the colour of all three, and possessed of that transient beauty of face and mind which, a few years hence, would obtain for her a back place in the ballet.

She was a chorus girl.

"In love," expostulated my lord, somewhat energetically; "why, of course I am," he added, recollecting himself—"how can I help it?"

He looked his fair guest in the face and laughed lightly. She took the glance and hint for herself, and blushed timidly.

"My dear," whispered the white young lady to her pink friend behind my lord's back, "I wouldn't take any notice of what he says. He doesn't mean anything."

"How do you know, Miss Jealous?"

"Oh, because he never means anything with women. He's known for it," replied the lady in white, and she tossed off a glass of Moët.

"You are all of you very quiet," remarked the member of Parliament across the table, "what's the matter?"

"*Vivere est cogitare*," murmured the Doctor, abstractedly.

"Ah, doctor-r-r, you must prescribe for him!" Mdlle. Coralie cried in her broken English and flexible French intonation.

"Do you know, I believe my lord *is* in love!" remarked Mr. Spry, as if he were volunteering some very extraordinary information, looking round at the assembled company with his smile for the green room.

"Bah!" shrugged the Robecourt, with a pout and a half smile to the M.P. The only thing lacking to the smile was the accompaniment of the footlights.

"I think it's the heat, or something," said the master of the house. "I do not feel myself to-night, but I beg you will not disturb yourselves."

"My lord, you must drink this," cried Mdlle., coming towards him with a bumper of champagne. "It will do you good."

My lord courteously thanked the fair cup-bearer, and drank the wine.

In a few minutes it seemed as though his brain was on fire. He felt a different man. The Robecourt had artfully blended a choice liquor with the drink. Stillingfleet, although the owner of one of the finest cellars in England, was an abstemious man.

This thought flashed through his lordship's brain. He need not deny himself his least desire—so why should he?

He was heated with wine, and intoxicated with the knowledge of his power and possessions. He looked at the little chorus girl in pink. Her eyes were as bright as the stars: her lips were rival cherries with the dew fresh upon them, and through them her teeth glimmered like two threads of broken white.

He rose, and beckoned her to the open window, and she came to him with a wildly-palpitating heart.

"What is your name?" he asked. "I forget."

"Daisy Ford."

"Daisy," he whispered, "how pretty you are."

His breath was as the south wind, and Daisy fluttered and trembled like her namesake.

My lord took her little hand, and pressed it. Daisy Ford had hoped for this interview, for my lord had singled her out from the other young ladies. She thought it was because he loved her. But the truth of the selection lay in the fact that there was something in the chorus-singer's eyes which reminded him of his dead love.

"Tell me about yourself, Daisy," my lord said, caressingly.

"My lord, there is not much to tell," she began. "Papa, when alive, was very well off," she added, with increasing confidence, "but he lost his money. When he died mamma was quite poor, and so I had to go on the stage to support her and myself and little brother. That is all."

"What a history of crime, thou poor pink Daisy!"

"Ha—hum," coughed Dr. Cramslot, looking in my lord's direction.

"I beg your pardon, did you speak?" queried a professional lady next to him, thinking this a good opportunity of engaging the silent doctor in a conversation.

"N-n-no; at least, yes, of course," he replied, with sudden animation. "Mr. Spry seems very much attached to Mdlle. Robecourt."

"There's no accounting for attachments," answered the second star, scornfully. "She's sixty, if she's a day; she wears all those diamonds on her throat to hide its scragginess."

"I thought professionals always regarded each other like sisters and brothers," observed that stupid Doctor.

"Her sister!" ejaculated the other. "Not much. I'm not old enough, thanks. Besides, I would not like to be the sister of one who goes on as she does."

"*Magna inter molles concordia*," murmured the Doctor, under his breath. And it was quite as well that the lady did not understand this quotation.

Clatter, clatter, clatter, clatter.

"Daisy!"

"Yes, my lord."

"What a pretty throat you have!"

"Oh! my lord."

The rest of the company were too occupied to take any notice of them. It was a glorious moonlight night. The wine, the lights, the wild gaiety of the surroundings, contrasted strangely with the placid beauty of the scene outside.

Daisy Ford looked up wistfully at her host. The laughter was now at its loudest, and Mdlle. de la Robecourt still prattled on with that engaging candour and childlike simplicity for which leading ladies off the stage are remarkable.

Daisy was fascinated with her host, and looked it. Stillingfleet did not mean to be cruel, he did not mean to be heartless, and he saw other men exert themselves to be both. He was angry with himself at times for being somehow different from other men, and then relapsed into a species of dreamy good-natured ease.

But now !

“ Pretty Daisy !” he said.

Daisy drooped her head lower and lower still, and came nearer to him. He put his arm about her waist and drew her to the open window. Actuated by an impulse he released her and put his head out. It was silent without. Over his fair estates, the moon, full of a dreamy light, bathed the lake and gardens in a stream of translucent silver. The whole of nature seemed hushed and sleeping ; the soft west wind swept gently by, bearing the scent of jessamine and roses in its wake. How different all would have been had *she*

lived. They might have been together then. With arms entwined they would have wandered beneath the old trees—he never wearied of telling her his love, as she never wearied of listening to it.

Oh! cruel Death, what had she so beautiful and young to do with it! She who had been so full of life and loveliness, she who had dazzled the hearts of men and women alike with her graces of person and of mind!

The man of sentiment compared the wretched drunken laughter of the mummers with the quietness of her now beneath the earth.

“Oh, my God! my God!” he groaned. And he pictured her as he saw her last with her little hands folded, her white-robed body strewn with flowers, immaculate emblems of her own life. When he drew in his head the room and its occupants swam round him and he felt dazed.

“My lord! my lord! you are ill,” cried the little chorus girl, alarmed.

“No, no,” he answered. “Don’t be alarmed, I am well, I assure you.”

Daisy placed her hand imploringly on his coat sleeve.

“You were going to say something to me before you looked out of the window,” she said, timidly. “Will you tell me now? May I ask you?”

He took her hand again, and looked at her with a wealth of pity in his dreaming eyes.

"My child, if I had always remembered what I do now, you would not be here to-night!" he said, quite gravely.

"You, you asked me to come—me especially!" she answered under her breath, with a tiny sob.

What a noise! what a noise! The room was like a little world, and no one took notice of the human tragedy being played in one act in one of its odd and many corners.

"I know I did, and it was wrong of me," he went on. "Child, if I were like other men I would have told you lies, and you would have had but a bitter awakening. Youth and beauty are yours. It is possible I would have told you the truth in saying I loved you, because to love the young and the beautiful is common to man. But for how long? The life of the ephemera could not be less lasting. I could have loved you, yes—but for a brief, brief space. Little Daisy, I am no preacher, but a man who soon tires of everything. We must not see each other again."

"My lord! my lord! Oh, no, no, no," and the devotion of her young and still-unspoiled heart burst out in those few words.

"I do not know what has come to me," he said, as if to himself. "There was a time when I could not have listened to what I do now."

The girl's cheeks were as blanched as the cheap lace on her pretty dress. She shivered convulsively. The unfailing woman's instinct told her at once that he loved another, although she did not know that the object of his devotion was dead.

"Where is she?" she demanded, almost fiercely.

The man of sentiment looked at her vaguely. How could he tell this little passionate mummer that his idyllic love was dead. She would laugh at him in her youth and virility. "I don't know," he returned—"I don't know where she is."

"Does she love you, would she give herself up for you as I would?"

"No, I think not," he answered, thoughtfully.

"Then what's the good of loving a woman who thinks more of herself than of the one she professes to love?" she cried, impetuously.

"Child, her ideas of honour—" he began.

"Bah!" she interrupted, scornfully. "Honour, yes, she would keep it all to herself, that honour; she wouldn't give it to you, and I—I would."

Daisy Ford's passion awoke no corresponding gleam in Stillingfleet's heart. He looked at her full of profound pity. She was charming in a temper; it was like the disturbance caused by a small pebble thrown into a clear brook.

"My lord!" Daisy said presently, breaking in on the pause that ensued, in subdued tones.

"My child!" came the interrogative answer in far-off accents.

"Could you not love me a little? Remember how you have asked to see me at the theatre. There is nothing on the wide earth I would not give up for you—if I had it. Let me be near you." The little chorus girl had developed suddenly into a woman, taking the principal *rôle* in the comedy-drama of life.

"I cannot," he answered, quickly—"I dare not now." His love for the dead woman purified his actions.

"My lord," Daisy said again, speaking now quite quietly, "I will not reproach you for having paid me any attention—some girls might—as I think I am to blame in this matter, too."

"No, no, *no*, I was a scoundrel," he interrupted, remorsefully.

"It might have been different," she continued, as though not noticing the interruption. "You could have taken what the world would call a cruel advantage of my affection. I never would have upbraided you. I would have been unhappy to marry you in your high position, even if you would have permitted. I never expected that. But tell me once for all now, for I am not certain of one thing. If some obstacle ever prevents you from claiming the other woman as your own, would you—could you—tolerate ever the love of—another?"

"By all that is holy, no!" he made answer, emphatically. "The race of which I come is like that of Heine's Azra. We love once, and die for that one we love."

"That is well," observed Daisy, with a sigh and a little dreamily. "And that makes you all the more as I thought, that is, different from all other men. It is very well."

He nodded his head sadly and gravely.

"Will you give me that orchid in your buttonhole before I go?" she asked, suddenly.

"Do not go alone? The others will stay on longer, I know," he said, taking her arm gently with one hand as with the other he gave her the flower from his coat. He always wore one of those queer dull red unmounted exotics. The orchid was one of his fads.

"I am tired," Daisy made answer, "and a good long sleep will make me better. What a curious flower."

He was surprised at her sudden transition from passion to calmness.

"Yes, they're curious enough. They say Cleopatra made garlands of them for Mark Antony."

"I have always thought," continued the man of sentiment, "that these peculiar orchids have risen from the earth fed by the dust of great Eastern kings and queens. Beautiful and perfumed flowers spring from the ashes of those who have had beautiful

thoughts and bodies in their lives, whilst those who have committed cruel and bad deeds are perpetuated on earth in the growth of noxious weeds and poisonous shrubs."

It is not sure that Daisy quite understood the drift of Stillingfleet's remarks, but one thing was certain, that she meant to go.

He escorted her to the door. On turning to go out with her into the hall Dr. Cramslot called out, "*Virtus est vitium fugere, et sapientia pruda.*"

"Don't be afraid, doctor," returned the young man, "I am only seeing this young lady out," and he smiled at his worthy mentor's words of caution.

Daisy ascended the broad old oak stairs thoughtfully, wondering perhaps if the dead and gone women of the house of Stillingfleet had suffered the pangs of rejected love. Then she laughed bitterly for the first time in her twenty years of life. No, the dead and gone feminine Stillingfleets had doubtless had their loves arranged for them, she thought, as she had read of in the papers. "'A marriage is arranged between Lord Humburgh, of London, to Miss Rawbacon, of New York,' or 'between Mr. Richman and Lady Poorman.' It's all by arrangement. It's all title and money, money and title, there's not a thought of love." Thus she puzzled over the want of human nature in a most natural way, and concluded that, in arranging a marriage or driving

another hard bargain, sentiment and affection were unknown quantities. Still ascending the broad stairs, the little mummer became as possessed of as deep a scorn of all the feminine Stillingfleets and their tribe as the biggest cynic might. Even in the wretchedness of a rejected love she felt the joy of freedom. She could love or hate as her instinct directed her. Those miserable creatures had their affections and aversions turned on for them, like so many taps, at their owners' will. This was Daisy's philosophy.

"Good night," called out his lordship at the foot of the stairs.

"Good night, my lord."

She stopped in the midst of her meditations, and turned a colourless but laughing face to him over the banisters. She appeared now as he had first seen her behind the footlights, only without the rouge.

"I beg your forgiveness, my child," quoth the man of sentiment; "I hope I have not wounded your feelings."

"No, no! Good-bye, my lord," and he caught a glimpse of the cheap pink dress as she turned on the staircase. She waved the flower at him, and disappeared to get her cloak.

For two days after the foregoing, Lord Stillingfleet could not get the little mummer out of his mind. She haunted him, as the saying goes. He felt he had wronged her, although he did not precisely know how,

and he wished to indemnify her in some way for having troubled her with thoughts of himself as a lover. On the morning of the third day he asked Dr. Cramslot to call on the manager of the theatrical company with a substantial gift for that personage, and to connive with him at the same time for the promotion of Miss Daisy Ford. The good-natured *savant* readily undertook the commission, and, with a little old volume of Cicero in his fat white hands, trudged off contentedly to that place of amusement known as the "Royal Theatre," varying the monotony of his solitary walk by stumbling against such people as he chanced to come near. The doctor left Lord Stillingfleet reading in the library, and the countenance of the former was composed and serene as was its wont, but when the doctor returned from his errand he looked flurried and pale. The volume of Cicero was in his pocket, not in his hand. He had evidently wended his way back without reading a single line.

"I need not ask you, doctor," observed the man of sentiment, gently, "if the affair will be arranged as I wish."

"*Verum putes haud ægre quod,*" began the Doctor, then, he added hurriedly, "How easily we believe that for which we earnestly wish." He sat down with a sigh, and mopped his perspiring face with his handkerchief, the latter taken out of his "wideawake" hat, which belied its name altogether, and looked

uncommonly sleepy. His lordship smiled at his old mentor, whose friendship had made his lonely prosperity brighter. He recognised in him a great genius lost in obscurity, and valued him as some would have a priceless gem, for he belonged to him alone. He would have considered him less if the vulgar had praised him.

"My little friend is going to be promoted?" he asked, turning over the leaves of an old volume, which emitted that faint odour peculiar to ancient leaves. "I'm glad of it, for she deserved it."

The doctor opened his Cicero.

"*Nihil est, virtute formosius, nihil pulchrius, nihil amabilius.*"

He read abstractedly enough.

The man of sentiment grew slightly impatient.

"Yes, but what did the manager say?" he asked.

"She has left," began the Doctor.

"Left the company?" echoed his pupil, surprisedly.

"Yes, she has left the company of actors in this life's drama," said the Doctor, quite sadly.

"But how!" cried out Stillingfleet, disturbed. "The child was quite well when I saw her last."

"Countless are the ways that lead to the grave," the *savant* said. "But Stillingfleet"—he rose and went to the young man, and added softly, "your wish is to be gratified. The child is promoted. The

Manager of the universe has given her a kinder and better part to play in another world."

"Poor girl, poor girl!" groaned out the younger man, hiding his face.

"She drowned herself after your party," the Doctor said. "Her body was seen floating down the stream, like Ophelia's. She held tight hold of a jellified thing that must have been a flower once."

"Oh, poor girl! poor girl!" cried out the man of sentiment again, as he remembered giving the orchid to his young guest.



A Modern Orpheus.

IN this our own century there lived a man. Now as far as men go, there is really nothing particularly uncommon about this fact. Here we are in this stale old world living our puny little lives, eating, drinking, striving to be happy a little, succeeding in being miserable a lot, and then tendering all our ambitions, hopes, loves, everything, to the insatiable ogre—Death. Here are we to envy our neighbours' wives and other chattels, ambitious to gain much, and in gaining it striving to obtain still more, until Death, like an extinguisher, puts us out. So ends all.

The hero of this story was not like anybody else. Heroes never are, by the way.

He was not particularly well favoured, this hero; he was considerably under the medium height, wore a red appendage on his upper lip which hid its sinuous length, and the hair of his head was likewise of a flaming tint. His eyes seemed to have caught in some way the reflection of his moustache, and his whole appearance inclined strongly to the grotesque. Well, this personage, who had neither looks nor money, conversation nor title, to recommend him—for titles cover a multitude of sins—was very

remarkable in his way. He neither led Society, nor clung on to the extremity of its bedraggled skirts. He did not grovel to Lady So-and-so for an invitation to her balls, for he had a sensitive dread of going to any place where he felt he was wanted. He came of no particular family, and he was not quite sure as to where he was born. For what he knew to the contrary, it may have been in Timbuctoo. His mother and father had kept a chandler's shop in a London slum. Besides candle, they sold hardbake and ginger-beer, wherewith the unwashed youth of the Golden Alley broke their teeth or slaked their thirst after their exertions in the gutters.

But they were now dead, and the name of John Jeremy Jones was all that had been bequeathed to their red-headed offspring, and a first-class violin which, by an unaccountable vicissitude of fortune, had belonged to Jones the elder.

The secret of John Jeremy Jones's success lay in his marvellous power over that same violin. He played tolerably well when he was seven, better when he was twelve, and simply wonderfully when he was fifteen.

His parents had died early, and until he was fourteen he had escaped not living by earning it as an errand boy at a retail grocer's.

One summer night, while in his little miserable garret, the windows open wide, he played, as was his wont, a few strains, with only the stars and mice as

audience. He had fallen by the wayside that day when delivering his goods, and his master had given him a week's notice in recognition of his breakages. He had no friends, for music had so refined him that he could not become companion to those in the same station of life as himself, so he made the violin his sole confidant, and poured out his grief to it as though it were alive. It appeared so, almost, in his hands.

During his playing, somebody knocked at his door.

He thought it was the landlady, keen on the two months' rent he owed, and his violin gave a sad wail in unison with his thoughts.

"Come in, Mrs. Smith, please."

It was not Mrs. Smith who answered the invitation, but a short, stout man possessed of a peremptory manner.

"Was it you I heard scraping when in the street below?"

J. J. Jones bowed. ("Come to complain of the noise," he thought, "an inspector of nuisances, probably.")

"If you please, sir," he gave audible reply, "I felt lonesome, and haven't a friend in the world, sir, but this, sir. If you please, sir, to forgive me this time, sir, I swear not to play it so loud again, sir. I really won't, sir."

The stranger looked at J. J. J. sternly.

"Are you making a fool of me?" he asked, "or one of yourself?"

Poor young Jones murmured, snivelling, that "he didn't know, that he wouldn't do it again, and that he was a poor lad out of work, or soon going to be——"

"Look here, young fellow," the stranger said, "it you mean what you say I'll take you up."

As Jones did not quite understand, the stranger assured him that he was greatly struck with his performance on the violin, that he was the conductor at the Royal Italian Opera, and that if Jones consented to become his pupil he would ensure him a remarkable success. So the grocer's assistant went with the stranger, and for three years studied hard at his violin. At the end of that time he had become so successful a performer that everyone raved about him.

When he made his first appearance at a public hall he looked so pitiably plain in evening dress that the people tittered, and a miserable timidity, that caused him to feel as though his knees were giving way, beset him.

There was a wilderness of faces in front of him as treacherous as the sea. They smiled and jeered at him in a way only known among people of the most politely heartless, and thoughtfully thoughtless, nation in the world. But lo and behold! when his bow had glided two or three times over the strings of his well-loved Stradivarius, the position and their attitude

changed. Jones could have jeered in his turn when he marked how breathlessly the audience listened to him, how like misers they thirsted for more of the golden melody that broke from his instrument under the guidance of his master hand.

Thunders of applause rewarded his display, and as he bowed his acknowledgments a smile of disdain for the people who had first reviled him curled his lips. They called him the Demon of the Violin, his mastery was so complete, and his appearance so fascinatingly ugly. There was scarcely a woman from a duchess to a peasant who did not fall in love with him on account of his wonderful power. For genius is the only power, save beauty, which essentially raises one man or woman above another. The tenet of Solon of Athens is a mistaken one. To "know thyself," at its best is but a narrow thing; it is the knowing of other things—other people—wherein wisdom lies.

He surpassed all expectations, and in a short time the whole of Europe rang with his fame. But, somehow or other, when he returned home at night he felt that his life was after all but an empty one, for, despite the number of *billets doux* he received, he remained a loveless man, and, however sceptics and cynics may sneer about it (sometimes 'tis a case of sour grapes), no life is worth a rap without love, if that love is of the right *timbre*. The fact was he did not care at all for the ladies, lowly or fine, who wrote amorous letters

to him. One was too old, another too young, a third too fat, and a fourth too thin. The handsome women were mostly silly, and showed their vanity most objectionably, and the clever women were mostly ugly. There was always something missing somewhere, and Jones sought perfection. He almost wished he had been born like many other men, with humble attainments, that so he should not desire more than the ordinary to satisfy him, and make his life less a void.

He had fine apartments now ; but one night, when the recollections of his early miseries and struggles were thick upon him, he strolled with his violin case to his early quarters. He found them tenantless, and, seized with a queer whim, such as only the artistic possess in ripe perfection, he asked to be shown to his old garret again. Giving the landlady "something for her trouble," he requested that he might be left alone for a while.

"Very well, sir," said the good woman, and away she went. Jones, left to himself, blew out the candle, opened the window, and looked out into the darkness. How beautiful it was ! Night, like a tragic widow in mourning for her spouse—Day, with a silent tread, walked the earth amid her star-bejewelled sables. He who had been the untiring servant of Art adored Nature, and the night with her starry shadows, the soft creeping winds, the whole ineffable loveliness of solitude, spoke the language of another world to him,

so that the tears coursed down his face as he raised his Stradivarius and played a sad, soft melody. Such is the perversity of genius that, when he noticed one star in particular winking and blinking at him in a peculiarly frolicsome and unheavenly sort of way, he played a quick waltz. And how he played it! And how the wicked little star above seemed to laugh and dance, keeping time to his movements! Why, he could scarcely refrain from dancing himself! Quicker and quicker went the music, until he thought the very Evil One might be transformed by the music into a dancing man. As this idea possessed him, the merry little star shut up abruptly and became naught. Then he peered into the street below, where a footstep fell to disturb the dead stillness.

As he looked he saw a huge black ball that seemed to rise before his eyes as though coming from the earth. It came higher and higher, and the artist started back in horror and in fear. Still it rose, this black cloudy-looking horrible thing, till it floated right into the room, and with a violent noise burst open! Flames and sulphur there came forth, and then a huge stream of white smoke that almost choked the violin player. And then the air became clear, the ball vanished, and in its stead there was a strange-looking gentleman dressed in black, with a red cloak gracefully thrown over one shoulder, and a very decided limp. The visitor bowed courteously and folded his arms.

"In the name of——," began the terrified mortal, shrinking like bad flannel in the wash.

"Diabolus!" put in the stranger, "don't say anything else, it hurts so."

The knees of the violin player shook under him, and the violin fell from his trembling grasp.

"No, don't," pleaded Diabolus soothingly, with all the politeness of half-a-dozen Frenchmen rolled into one. "Compose yourself, my boy, I can wait."

But that was precisely what Jones did not want, and so he only gasped and shivered more.

"This won't do," Diabolus remarked, with the vehement emphasis of an angry woman. "Drink this little elixir, it'll do you good."

The artist objected, faintly.

"Down with it," Diabolus said, peremptorily, "or I'll——"

"No, no, no, don't, pray!" pleaded Jones, hurriedly, "I'd do anything to oblige you. Give it to me."

And, taking the small flask Diabolus handed to him, he drained it to the dregs.

No sooner had he done this than he threw back his head and burst into a peal of laughter.

"'Pon my word," he spluttered out, "what a welcome for a fiend like you! Give me your flipper, old man, and tell me if I can be of any service to you. I'll do what you want at all hazards."

"Of course," replied the devil, approvingly, "I knew you would, you are made of just the metal I expected. In the first place, you don't think me bad company, do you?"

"Dear me, no."

"People don't speak kindly or fairly of me," Diabolus observed, with doubt and resentment mingled.

"Oh! don't trouble about that," returned the artist, cheerfully. "Men hide their own sins and offences while stripping those of others bare. Solitude hides men's vices, but publicity uncovers them. The more popular the person the more sins he is found to possess. The devil is the most wicked, because his is the example all others follow."

"Oh, well, really!" expostulated Diabolus, highly flattered. "You put it in such a way that I——"

"You see!" pursued the artist, warming to his subject, "you are really quite good looking, and your manners undeniable; at least, to those who have mixed with Courts as I have——"

"My dear sir," interrupted Diabolus, "they learn it from me."

"And," continued Jones, not noticing the interruption, "you are a man of the world—a diplomatist, I take it, and can talk of the State and the Church with the best of them. But may I delicately inquire what good wind blows me the honour of this unexpected visit?"

"To tell you candidly, and not make a fuss about a mere trifle, as they do in plays and operas, I am giving a ball to-night"—he pointed downward with his finger—"and I want you to fiddle up for the dancing!"

"Oh!"

"Yes," Diabolus went on, confidentially, "I have a select party every fortnight on a similar scale to that which prevails up here. I don't mean in the garret, but in your fashionable ballrooms. I used to fiddle myself, but you can do that a deal better than I can."

"Humph! that's all very well," murmured Jones, "but——"

"Are you going to have any recompense for your trouble, you would ask? Why, of course," returned Diabolus, heartily. "You're in search of a wife, I know, and I warrant you what earth cannot produce for you to your complete satisfaction, my place shall."

"Well, you know," Jones remarked, with a glance that spoke volumes, "our world produces so many ladies such as we poor mortals imagine come from your place that really I have my doubts about the desirability of the suggestion."

Diabolus sniggered.

"Pshaw!" said he, "you don't know what you're talking about. Why, man, the handsomest and cleverest women are all mine. They all come my way. It's only natural. I love 'em, and so do they

me. Can't help it on either side, bless 'em. Come along!" So saying, the devil drew Jones (on whom the elixir had had a remarkably invigorating effect) under his arm, and, spreading the folds of his cloak round the shoulders of both, he stamped his foot thrice on the ground, and they sank, sank, deep into the bowels of the earth.

When Jones recovered from the shock of the rapid descent, he found himself in an enormous hall, lighted by Will-o'-the-wisps which danced hither and thither, and peopled by men and women who bore a most earthly appearance.

Diabolus had Jones still under his cloak, and appeared highly amused with his guests.

"My friend," said he, courteously, "I know you never expected this; people do so pervert the truth who write about my dwelling-place, and I want you to set them right when you go back."

"I say," exclaimed the violin player, suddenly, "how's this? I see a man over there whom I know at present to be alive on earth."

Diabolus smiled, and closed his eyes in an excess of satisfaction.

"I know it," he observed in a bland tone of conviction—"know it perfectly. Another common fallacy, my dear fellow. Half the clever men and women steal a march on fools, and come down here in spirit, and I take a pleasure in dressing them up in

bodies (counterfeits of which I keep on the premises) and making 'em dance."

"And I am to understand—whilst they are pretending all sorts of good and noble things on earth——"

"I possess the greater part of their spirits, and, keeping a copy of their bodies down here, clothe them accordingly."

"Who's that individual over there?" asked Jones.

"Oh! that's an actor. He has carried his art to such a pitch that only on the stage is he simple, natural, and unaffected; off it he is artificial and stilted."

"Who's the man with the far-away look in his eyes, gazing upwards?"

"That's an astronomer, wrapped in abstraction. He searches at a distance for those beauties which Nature has provided near at hand."

"Will he ever find them?"

"Nay; human life is not long enough for that!"

"Who is that man—that fat man with a book in his hand."

"That is an author."

"'m!" remarked Jones, parenthetically, "I really didn't know a purgatory was provided for authors in your world, they suffer so intensely from publishers and critics in mine."

"They do not suffer always," corrected Diabolus,

archly. "See, there's a stupid little woman over yonder, whose every line is praised by every paper."

"Yes, of course," replied the musician, cynically. "Her husband is a considerable advertiser."

"Don't talk scandal," remarked the fiend. "Now look at that other woman over there. She always earns the approval of critics."

"That may well be," responded Jones, who had a vulgar habit of sneering, like all people who have seen the seamy side of life. "Her husband is the editor of a great paper. It would be akin to sacrilege to differ from him."

"Certainly!" acquiesced Diabolus, in a conciliatory sort of way. "I cannot help thinking, myself, that those who rush into print because they want to become famous are like the fools who go to Court because they would be seen. Besides, it is so easy not to write books!"

Jones: "Is that person over there, giving himself such grandiose airs, a king?"

Diabolus: "No! you fool. That's a journalist."

Jones: "Well, what is he so proud about?"

Diabolus: "Napoleon said four newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets. He is owner of one. You wouldn't be what you are if it were not for the Press."

Jones: "Has not real genius anything to do with it, then?"

Diabolus: "Real genius be ——. This is an age of advertisement; geniuses, like actresses, require puffs—both sorts—to be recognised."

Jones (slyly): "You mean puffs *not* to be recognised."

Diabolus: "Exactly."

Jones: "Who is that tall man yonder, with a stoop?"

Diabolus: "That is the eminent novelist, Burzelbaum. He used to be a journalist, but has since taken to novel writing. It's so much more profitable."

Jones: "Never!"

Diabolus: "Oh, yes. There's a mystic charm in his possession, called L.O.G.R.O.L.L.I.N.G. With that he charms all critics to speak well of his works."

Jones: "Oh, I see. His old friends of the pen criticise his fancy work favourably because he is one of them, and not because it possesses any special merit of its own."

Diabolus: "You are not entirely wrong, my dear fellow; not entirely wrong."

Jones: "Who's that smug-faced rascalion yonder?"

Diabolus: "That's an eminent criminal judge."

Jones: "And that other man near him, who is he?"

Diabolus: "A judge."

Jones: "That fellow whispering to him, who is he?"

Diabolus : "Another judge."

Jones : "Those men giggling in a group close by?"

Diabolus : "All judges."

Jones : "Is it possible?"

Diabolus : "Where the people are most corrupt, there the law and the lawgivers are most numerous."

Jones : "But who punishes them if they do wrong?"

Diabolus : "They *never* do wrong—or if they do they are never found out, which amounts to the same thing. Different people do wrong with very different consequences. One man will gain a crown for doing that for which another man is hanged."

Jones : "Who are the group of men talking all at once, and each seemingly of their own especial hobbies, without regard to the others?"

Diabolus : "They are musicians, poets, painters, whose egotism leads them to the exclusive devotion to their own art and an absolute contempt for all others."

Jones : "I think those one-sided people are no better than fools!"

Diabolus : "They are rather more dangerous!"

Jones : "I seem to recognise that pretty woman over there. Isn't she one who intends to elevate the stage?"

Diabolus : "Aye, aye; but there's less elevation required there than elsewhere. What people really want is genuine talent, which no amount of culture can

simulate. You can get elevation at Lady Borewell's evenings, when her classical daughters play classical *morceaux-de-salon* in a way to make the composers turn in their graves, their masters gasp with horror, and their listeners sick with *ennui*."

Jones: "Yes, but those young ladies are all so good—so virtuous."

Diabolus: "These are people on whom virtue sits almost as ungraciously as vice. Some people of merit are hateful, and there are others who please with all their defects and vices."

Jones: "Who is that sanctimonious-looking man with a round oily face and fat paunch?"

Diabolus: "He is an intimate friend of mine."

Jones (in a horrified tone): "He looks like a clergyman?"

Diabolus: "Yes, poor man! Why should he not count me his friend as the rest do? He works hard enough for me, I know."

Jones: "Oh! I am rather surprised to hear you moralise."

Diabolus: "And yet all my disciples do so on earth."

Jones: "Why is that man, whom all the world has praised for being great and good, in this place?"

Diabolus: "Do you allude to the eminent explorer? Well, he would be ashamed of his actions instead of

being proud of them were the world but to see the methods by which they were achieved."

Jones: "Who are the men who are being disinfecting by one of your attendants?"

Diabolus: "They? Oh, they are company promoters. I always have that done to them."

Jones: "They are too hot even for you?"

Diabolus: "Exactly, but don't ask any more questions. Time is up, so fiddle."

Diabolus then took off the invisible cloak which all this time had enveloped both, and gave Jones his violin. Jones could not help feeling slightly disappointed in noting how like a commonplace drawing-room was this place, which he had always hoped to visit, and that Diabolus was only an ordinary sort of chap. He had made up his mind that it was going to be dreadfully bad, dreadfully hot, and dreadfully uncomfortable.

"I don't see my Eurydice, either," he thought. "All the women here are dreadfully like the ones where I have come from."

"Take your partners for a general confusion," cried out Diabolus, who acted as M.C. as well as host; "and, Fiddler Jones, do your best."

"I would like to see a little more steadiness, though. Ladies, slower time. You are all going at so fast a rate that even I won't be able to keep up with you presently."

The wild dance made poor Jones awfully giddy, but he did his best, and it was perfectly executed. The last strain of the violin was the signal for tremendous applause. That is to say, all clapped their hands, but there only came forth a sound as of the rustling of leaves. Presently, Diabolus cried out in a stentorian voice, "Dismiss!" and in a second, the hall was empty, and only Jones remained with his entertainer, who was a host in himself.

Diabolus drew near him and clutched his hand. There was no more of the genial devil about him; he appeared to have grown into something stern and terrible. His eyes scintillated with fire, and from his lips came smoke—and the following invocation :

Faces down life's troubled way
In quick succession pass;
Serene and stormy, grave and gay,
Compose the unending mass.

And one above those myriads, I
Do mock each common lot;
For all men, great and small, must die,
And all things go to Pot.

But I who hold the hand of Fame,
Whom Death can never call,
Mine is the might and mine the name,
Though kings and kingdoms fall.

Oh, haste! ye fiends of deepest gloom,
Obey your friend and king,
Search well among all womenkind,
And me the fairest bring.

As the last words fell from his lips, the cloudy ceiling rolled away as if it were a carpet folded by invisible hands, and there descended a thing like a huge white flower. It sparkled and coruscated like the brightest stars bathed in the moon's translucent rays. In its centre was seated, as though in unwakened meditations, with her lovely hair adorned by long golden tresses, a divinely graceful woman. Her covering was like Egyptian drapery, being a rich thick veiling studded with thousands of many coloured gems, which hung round her form in serpentine coils. Her skin was so dazzlingly fair that it seemed a part of the glistening white flower itself, only that the faintest tint of pink was in her colouring. Her regular breathing was the only thing real about her.

"Oh, she is an angel!" cried Jones, in awe-struck tones, and clasping his hands in rapture.

"Eurydice, approach!" Diabolus commanded, with upraised arm.

"Master!" she who was seated on the flower answered, in a voice of exquisite sweetness, "speak to me. I listen to obey."

"Approach!"

The huge white flower drooped gradually, and she glided down; with slow motion and bent head, and arms folded across her breast, she came to the master-fiend.

"Eurydice, it is my will that you should follow

this man to earth, and be unto him as a wife. Hearest thou?"

"Master, I hear!" she answered in a deep solemn voice, kneeling at his feet.

"Always shalt thou cling to him, always shalt thou listen to him," instructed Diabolus in stern monotone, like a priest chanting a litany.

With his claw-like fingers extended over her bowed head, he continued, "And thou, man of clay, with thing of beauty and life to be thine for life, I put but one command on thee; for fear of losing her instantly, see thou that no profane word issues from thy lips in her presence ever, or she shall vanish instantly from thy sight. Thus do I repay thee for thy trouble. Go!"

* * *

A year passed. Two. Three. And Jones lived in a state of uninterrupted bliss with his Eurydice. They lived in grand style, for Jones's name was on everybody's lips, and fabulous sums were paid him when he played.

Eurydice Jones was also a popular person on account of her extreme beauty, and the photographers' studios were filled with pictures of her in all sorts of attitudes and dresses. But the latter were all high-necked; the violin player objected to his wife wearing low-cut bodices, and she obeyed him for three years without murmuring.

One night she was going to a ball with him to a great personage's house, and what was his surprise and horror to see her *décolletée* in a very conspicuous style. She looked at him laughingly. In another woman it might have been a merry mischievous spite, but from her sparkling eyes something deeper shone; the thought was a horrible one, but Jones, for the first time, detected the she-demon in them.

He ground his teeth in anger.

"Put on another dress immediately!" he commanded.

"No; I am going in this one," she said, flatly.

"Put on another dress immediately!" he shouted, hoarse with rage.

"I won't."

"Go to the ——" but he stopped himself in time, remembering Diabolus's injunction.

"My darling!" he added, quietly, "go as you please, you are beautiful in any dress."

They went off together, and all the evening she danced and flirted dreadfully with a guardsman who stood six feet two in his socks, thereby having a distinct advantage over Jones, who could not rise to the occasion.

"I say, Jones, old man," one man said to him during the evening at the buffet, "where is the lovely Mrs. J.?"

Jones consulted his programme, and answered that he didn't know, but that the next waltz was his.

"By the way, have you seen my wife?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the other, "it's the talk of the room. You'd better look into the conservatory."

Jones, in hot haste, left his iced champagne, and ultimately came upon his wife in the place mentioned in the arms of the guardsman.

Jones heard smacks. She was returning kiss for kiss!

Awful thoughts rose to his brain; he wanted to kill them both; wanted to call all the people from the ballroom; he wanted to swear! But he didn't do any of these things.

"My dear," he said gently, bowing with a courtly grace to the guardsman, "I've a terribly bad headache, and I rather think we had best go home."

Eurydice Jones, having once broken from the curb, now laughed her husband to scorn.

It was in vain he begged and entreated; she was determined to set all his wishes at defiance.

At first Jones insisted; he begged her for the old love's sake to conform a little more to his will.

"Only think how the world will talk," said the modern Orpheus, "and leave me out of the question."

"What care I for your tittle-tattling world? I find it better to affront people than to oblige them. The better one is, the worse one's name is handled. At

least, there is some satisfaction in knowing one has earned one's bad name."

She looked so devilishly beautiful at all times that Jones, who was quite bewitched, would have suffered anything rather than swear and lose her.

"Do as you wish, Eurydice," he said, meekly; and for consolation fled to his dear companion, the old violin.

Soon the town rang with the doings of Mrs. Jones. Respectable folk—that is to say, the feminine portion thereof—metaphorically banged their doors in her face, while the male portion of the community rubbed their hands with glee. So the haughty portals of Society were closed upon her, and she stretched her dainty fingers to her lovely nose, and yelled in laughing derision.

"It's all very fine for you good people to close your doors against me, but you're only virtuous because you cannot help yourselves." Ultimately she stated it was her intention to adopt the variety stage. It was fashionable, and would make the Duchess of So-and-so, and Lady This or That, die of envy.

"Very well, my darling!" said her husband, wearily; "it will be against my wish, but, of course, that is of no consequence to you."

She jeered in a most heartless way, but still looked lovely.

"Your wish," she replied, "I don't think much of it: you are right."

"And yet you appeared so obedient and gentle on that flower before I married you," mournfully remarked Jones.

"In that respect you're like a great many people, to find the sweetheart an angel and the wife a devil," she returned, drily. "Have you seen how the manager has advertised me? I am going to have the smallest tights ever worn by anyone on the boards! Isn't that fame?"

The poor poetic violin player gasped out that he thought she should not so debase her womanhood, and that it was *not* fame.

"It is fame," she said, angrily. "Your financiers, your diplomatists, your authors, build their notoriety on scarcely anything bigger."

"Eurydice! Eurydice!" moaned Jones, "I want to save you from hell."

How beautiful and touching true love is. Think of this man, with his most delicate feelings outraged on every point and in all directions by this wicked woman, and yet not giving vent to a single profane word! Does it not show that true love can implant patience and command over our passions where all else would fail?

One morning he awoke, and observed his wife. It was a dreary day, and thunder seemed in the air.

His lips quivered as he watched her face, and in his eyes a strange wild look might have been detected. His hands grasped at something convulsively.

"Shall I?" he thought. "No! no! I love her too well, despite her waywardness;" and he took her hand and kissed it in tears.

She awoke with a frightened start.

"My child, it is I," he said, "fear not."

"I dreamt," she answered, pushing aside her wilderness of copper-coloured hair with a fearful gesture, "I thought I was there again in that horrid place, doomed for an endless imprisonment on that flower top, and surrounded by sounds too awful for hearing and sights too dreadful for vision. I have wronged you; but pity—pity and save me."

She sank into his arms, palpitating and sobbing.

"My Eurydice," he murmured, through his caresses, "I have longed for this. I freely forgive you—I freely forgive you, and I will save you," and he felt himself to be the happiest man in the world.

How glad he was that he had not sworn. For this sweet reconciliation he would have given his heart's blood.

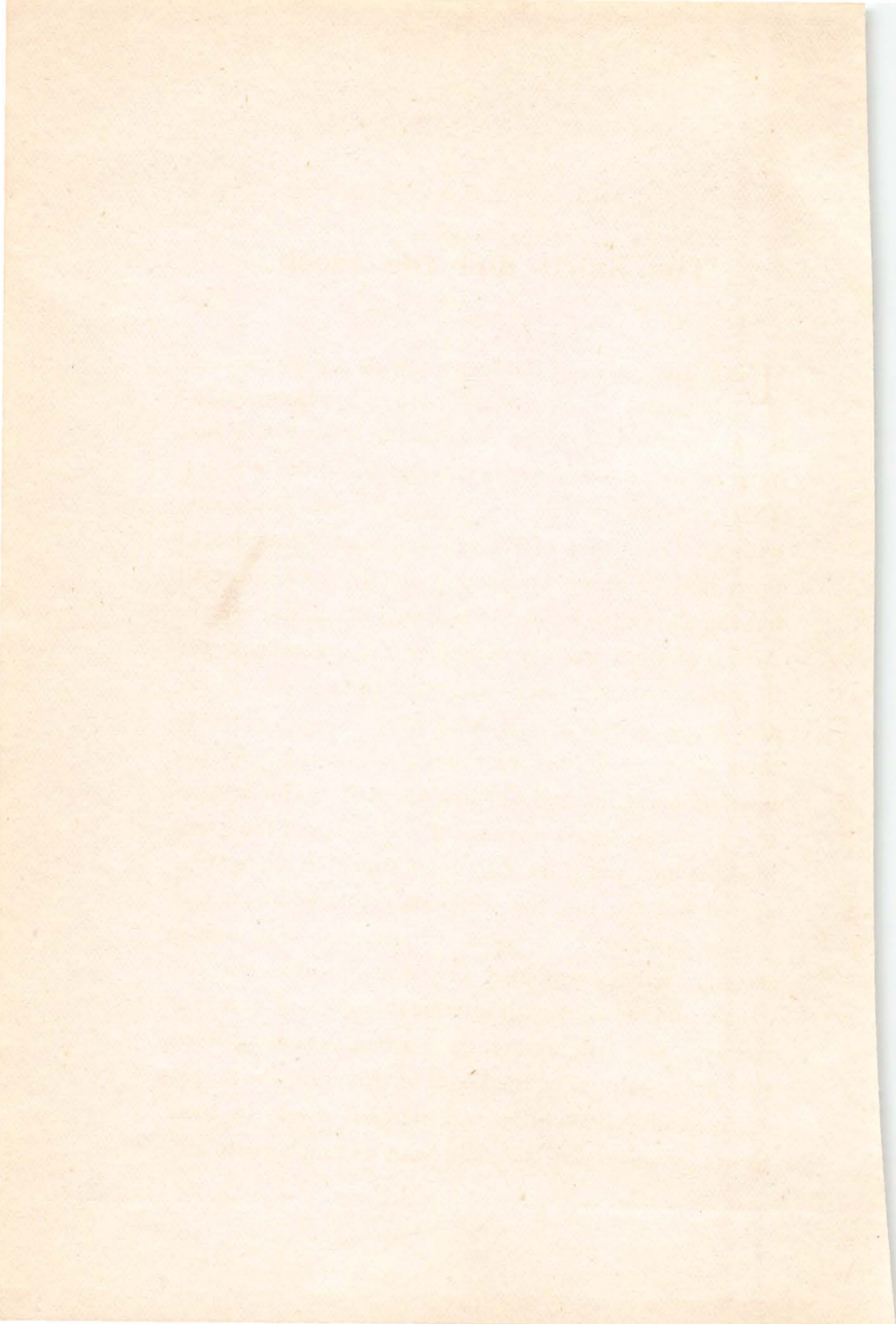
At breakfast one of the servants came in, bringing a silver tray with a tempting repast. They sat down together, the husband and wife, and she, with "eyes that spake love to eyes that spake again," bit into a peach. He was of grosser earth, and extremely

hungry, and cut into a piece of meat that had all the appearance of being a steak.

"Why, the d——d thing is raw," he shouted, furiously. "Eurydice, change that cook!"

No sooner had he spoken than he found himself alone, yet not alone; for the air seemed to teem with violins and Eurydices. He uttered one great shriek, and—— awoke! It was all a dream.





The Spirit and the Flesh.

THE great sides of Paris shook with good-humoured laughter. It rippled gaily along the Boulevards; it was smothered in the *cafés* over the *petits verres*, and burst into one unconscious cataract in all the *ateliers*. That incarnation of respectability, the bourgeois, with all the virtues of the ten commandments forced upon him (with an undeniable proclivity to break all but the eleventh), walked to business chuckling over it. Actors of stern tragedy forgot in the green room the importance of their *rôles*—and other things—to whisper and laugh about it. Authors who brought glory to their country, dignity to thought, knowledge to the unenlightened, paused to smile about it. The instructors of youth, whose business it was to teach the green intellect how not to be found out should it do wrong, spared not the rod, the while they tittered at the tale which assailed their ears. Journalists—the most popular writers amongst civilised peoples—laughed openly and outright with ulterior thoughts of excellent “copy,” and religion-mongers, when preaching what they graciously called the Word of God from the pulpit, demonstrated how little real religion dwelt in their hearts by discussing the affair with as much gusto and

scandal as any spinsterial person of uncertain age. A fine sounding oration before a politely contrite audience of churchgoers certainly covers many a reverend gentleman's private sins. Religion is preached nowadays, not so much to convince those of little faith of the truth, as to give occupation to those who are of little use for anything else. Be this as it may, on a certain evening in early summer, a withered man, old beyond his years, yet bearing withal a certain air of dignity that neither his shortness of stature nor his premature decrepitude could conceal, walked into the Café Anglais, and, taking a seat at one of the tables, called for a cup of coffee and liqueur of brandy. Pouring the latter into the former, he began to sip it slowly. He was, to all appearances, well known and respected, judging by the way the *garçons* of that ultra-fashionable establishment hastened to him, and the two men who were his *vis-à-vis* at the same table took off their hats. They did not know him, but the dignity of the old man's bearing compelled them to show him that respect. The two men were evidently laughing at the huge joke that circulated through Paris, but they lowered their voices and half smothered their mirth at the approach of the new-comer.

"Pardon, messieurs," said the latter, courteously. "But I arrived from St. Petersburg but yesterday. It appears to me that since I left Paris four weeks ago something very strange must have happened to it.

Everyone is laughing fit to die—I can make nothing of it—my faith!” with a half apologetic shrug of the shoulders.

One of the gentlemen at the same table laughed outright.

“A thousand pardons, monsieur,” quoth he, “but if you only knew you would laugh as we—as I do,” and forthwith the speaker burst out into a fresh ha! ha! ha!

“Camille,” spake the other, “you are an idiot. Why don’t you respond to monsieur’s question?”

“Oh! oh! oh!” cried out his friend, in a fresh outburst, putting his chubby hands to his sides.

“I am losing patience!” said his companion, angrily. “It does not really matter how funny a thing may be, for surely that’s no reason for a gentleman to forget his manners.”

“Monsieur is perfectly right,” the old man said, calmly. “I am a Frenchman, but a stranger to Paris for some months. I asked a simple question.”

“Monsieur must pardon me. Nay, he will laugh, too, when he hears the nature of the joke over which Paris laughs so heartily,” responded the delinquent, turning grave all of a sudden, for his behaviour as a gentleman was being called in question.

The old man lighted a cigar and prepared to listen.

“Monsieur is a man of the world,” observed the one he addressed. “He has travelled much and seen

much. But I venture to think he has never heard anything so comical as this. Just picture to yourself that the young Duc Maurice de Dumaesque, who came into such a great fortune some months ago, has not only spent everything on Diane de Florian, but has mortgaged everything up to the ears, even his honour. He had, I must tell you, a pretty taste for painting; indeed, if he had not been a nobleman he might have been a genius. So, finding all his means of subsistence gone, he has taken an *atelier*, and lives there with Diane, and paints pictures of her perfectly nude which no one will buy."

Whilst this little sketch was being rapidly drawn for the benefit of the old gentleman, his cigar went out, and ultimately dropped from his hand.

"Of course," giggled the other, "you know that Diane de Florian is the first courtesan in Paris; fancy the Duc ruining himself for a baggage who was once the mistress of a *chiffonnier*!"

"He must be mad. His father is away. It will kill the old man when he knows it; he is so honourable."

"No, it won't," growled the listener; "I'll take very good care it doesn't. Faith! if there's any dying he shall do it. The scoundrel! Where do they live?"

"Everyone knows!" answered the one addressed as Camille. "The first *gamin* in the Boulevards will tell you. It has been in all the papers. You may

find a crowd now watching them as they go in and out. She is so fat, and he is so thin and distinguished."

"Where do these miserable wretches live?" roared the old man. "I am a stranger; I have not read the French papers recently."

"No. 33, Boulevard —," returned the other, surprised at the gentleman's vehemence.

Bidding them a hasty good-night, the old man left the *café*. No sooner had he gone than one of the conversationalists called the *garçon* and asked—

"Who is that old gentleman who has just left?"

"Don't you know, monsieur? That is the old Duc Henri de Dumaresque. He arrived from St. Petersburg last night."

"Phew!" whistled the other, turning a face on which blank astonishment reigned supreme. "This business will turn out funnier yet. If I had known, the old boy wouldn't have heard anything from me." And the man looked quite grave at having drawn a fellow creature into trouble.

"Bah! If we hadn't have told him, someone else would."

The old Duc lost no time, and, hailing a *fiacre*, directed the man to the house where his delinquent son and heir lived with Diane de Florian.

"M. le Duc is not at home," the porter said. "But—oh, yes, madame is." This answer was

elicited by a gentle pressure in his palm, occasioned by the unexpected presence of a twenty-franc piece.

"Let me see madame, then!"

"But, m'sieur, I must first acquaint her——" expostulated the man.

Another golden pressure, and the nobleman trotted up the thickly-carpeted stairs of Mdlle. Florian's abode straight into her boudoir. He was left at the door by the porter.

Monsieur le Duc entered without the slightest hesitation. The room in which he found himself was a veritable nest of luxury. The walls were hung with silk; the ornaments and the furniture delightful. He cast a contemptuous glance round. "I should have thought the young fool knew better," he thought. "He ought to be too used to such surroundings to fall in love with them. Now, if he had been in a garret," he mused, "it would have had the charm of novelty at least."

"What's this?" he gasped. "My blue shepherd from the Salon."

In the centre of the mantelpiece the effigy of a china boy roused his indignation more than his own boy had done. He had given twenty thousand francs for that china boy, and his rascal of a son had placed it on his mistress's mantelpiece. Real tears sprang to the old man's eyes. "*Lâche!*" he murmured, "everything is true, then. The whole of Paris laughs at my son, and no wonder."

"Monsieur," said a voice, breaking in upon his meditations.

M. le Duc glanced before him. From a curtained door adjoining the room there appeared a plump, well-proportioned figure, clad in a delightful pink gown. The face was nice enough with its sparkling eyes, *nez retroussé*, and pretty mouth, but it was not in them that the charm of this person lay. It was in the form which exhaled so much of nature in its curves and roundness. The features played a secondary part. Here was the she-animal who fascinated by reason of her absolute sensualism. She relied on nothing else. She did not even trouble to "make up," like many beautiful women.

"Madame," said the visitor, bowing, "I have come to speak to you about my son."

"Take a seat, Monsieur le Duc, pray," returned Diane, motioning him to one, as she sat on a low *fauteuil* with a resigned look on her face.

Diane was used to interviews. She had had them with wives about their husbands, with brothers about brothers, and with fathers about sons innumerable, like an inquiry agent. It was annoying at first, but she was used to it now. Her visitor knew that well enough, and resolved to play his game guardedly.

"I hear Maurice has gone through his large fortune," he observed.

"Yes," answered Diane, "he has; I have had a

studio fitted up for him, and he is now practising his art."

"I do not wonder," responded the old diplomat, "with such a model. Do his pictures sell?"

"No, they don't," said Madame, seriously and decidedly.

"Oh! then you are rich, since he is poor?" said the Duc, interrogatively.

"When my few thousand francs are spent I will have nothing. Absolutely nothing."

M. le Duc waited for this, knew this, bargained for it. "These creatures," he thought, "have no foresight—nothing. So much the better. I shall be able to buy Maurice off her quite cheaply, and, and—my Dresden blue boy."

"Maurice," spake the old nobleman, "is as poor as a church mouse now. Unless I make him an allowance, you may as well have a beggar for your lover."

"I know," Diane de Florian said, quietly. "What of it?"

"Knowing your love of luxury and refinement, I propose to, to——" he hesitated. Madame afforded him no help, except in a monosyllabic "Well!"

"I propose to give you a large sum down, and so much a year, if you send this infatuated son of mine away from you," said the old man, after a pause.

"I cannot accept your offer, monsieur."

"Cannot!"

"No, I—yes, I—Diane de Florian, the ex-modiste of the Faubourg St. Antoine, whose real name is——"

"Marthe Berton," murmured the Duc.

"Exactly—love your son!"

The old man raised his hand deprecatingly. He was not surprised. It was a trick, merely a trick of women of her class, to obtain sympathy.

"I have no doubt, M. le Duc, that you do not credit what I tell you, but, for all that, it is a fact. If I am forced to leave my luxurious surroundings, so much the better. I shall then be able to show Maurice that 'tis he I love and not his wealth."

The Duc shrugged his shoulders and wondered what game she was playing.

"Harsh things are said about you," he observed, changing his tactics. "They say that you were, amongst other things, the former mistress of a *chiffonnier*. If you love my son as you say, how can you possibly consider yourself a fit associate for him?"

The shadow of a smile played round Marthe Berton's, *alias* Diane de Florian's, small mouth, as she answered—

"If lies are told about honest women, how much more so about one of my class, monsieur?"

Diane's life had made her as cynical as an old courtier of sixty, and yet as sentimental as a novel-crammed miss of sixteen. She could weep her pretty

eyes out over the untimely death of a little bird, and view with perfectly callous indifference the downfall of an honourable man, ruined morally and financially by herself.

"As the appreciation of honesty permeates you to such a remarkable degree," the Duc observed, with a half sneer, "I am surprised that you took to this sort of life."

"You are not surprised!" snapped the woman, harshly. "Did I crave for this, or any other life? I tell you, you know better, M. le Duc. Through poverty and through circumstances I was driven to it. When I left the modiste's shop I married what you would call an honest man! A fig for being an honest wife! Men in your station, monseigneur, treat their wives like animals, merely to bring sons into the world so the breed should not die out; men in my station handle their wives like things that have neither thought nor feeling. I left that brute for someone else. Honesty!" she laughed, harshly, "you masters of the world teach us how to be honest. I have hitherto chosen rather to be the mistress of many than the slave of one."

"What an extraordinary woman!" thought the Duc."

"I gather from your former remarks, however, that you will be faithful to my son," was his audible commentary.

Diane nodded gravely.

"The young fool will marry you, perhaps," he blurted out.

"I will not marry your son, although I am divorced."

"Why?" began her visitor, curiously.

"I know too much of husbands to require one," she answered, ironically.

"You have certainly been the cause of many ruptures between husbands and wives," grinned her visitor, amused in spite of himself.

"There might have been many more if the wives had only known their husbands better. Yes, it's surprising. . . . These husbands who tell their wives that they cannot afford them a new silk dress . . . come to me with gifts of precious things. *Hein!* but it's droll! how the giddiest husbands are the most anxious about the virtue of their wives, and these respectable wives who look down upon my class are simply virtuous because they lack the opportunity to be otherwise."

The Duc was annoyed. The reminiscences were eminently vulgar, so he rose to depart, entreating madame to send his son to the family hotel in the Boulevard d'Hausmann that night to dinner. Madame was very affable. She promised to send Maurice without fail, and so the Duc left, sighing as he glanced at the mantelpiece on which his precious ornament stood.

It was really difficult to know which he bewailed most, the fate of his Dresden blue boy or that of his own flesh and blood. Mainly through the supplications of Diane, her lover often wended his way to the Boulevard d'Hausmann, and between him and his father grave dissensions arose. The elder man did not attempt to break off his son's *liaison* abruptly. He knew the world too well for that. He merely informed him that, whilst he loved him like a good father, he had no intention of assisting him in the continuance of his disgraceful connection by giving him an allowance, adding, significantly, "Not one sou do you get from me until you marry an honourable woman!"

One night the discussion between the father and son was longer and graver than ever it had been before. At eleven o'clock Maurice left the paternal roof and sought Diane hurriedly, evidently labouring under intense excitement.

"No! no! It is impossible," he cried, striding up and down madame's precious little boudoir.

"What's impossible, *mon ami*?" inquired Diane, stretching herself with sensuous grace on a low divan and dimpling a smile at him. Not because she felt in a mood to do so, but because it was one of her greatest commercial qualifications, and she was not old enough for people to call it a practised smile.

He stopped abruptly in front of her.

"Diane! my father wishes me to marry. He

refuses to let me have a sou to live upon. I don't care for myself, but you!"

Diane still smiled. She had heard such avowals from other sons before.

"And, of course, like an obedient son, you promised him?" she asked, contemptuously.

"Diane!"

"I did not mean that—pardon me, my friend. I know you are too staunch to me," she continued, "but whom did he wish you to marry?"

"The Princess Marie de Xandoff, from Moscow, who is staying in Paris with her mother. She is fabulously wealthy, and—both parents desire the alliance."

"Oh!" laughed the woman. "Everyone knows her—that tall, thin girl with a pale face, flat chest, and brilliant eyes. She has the finest equipages in Paris. You might as well be married to a broom handle, my friend. She has an affection of the heart, as well."

"The idea," ejaculated Maurice, "to leave a goddess like you are for that skeleton."

Diane became suddenly seized with an idea. "You must marry her. She has millions, and we shall be happy still."

It is an old but true thought that no man ever becomes utterly depraved at once; but when a woman has lost her chastity she shrinks from very little in the

way of crime. Maurice Dumaresque was horror-struck at the suggestion at first, but little by little vice was made beautiful by this creature who exhaled so much of bountiful nature in her person, and the end was he half promised to wed the princess and still maintain the *liaison* with Diane. This personage knew a man's heart considerably better than most men, and the while she entreated him to conform to his father's wish, she was mapping out a line of life for herself.

"She will not last," she thought; "she will become thinner and thinner, and I will become finer and handsomer on the money Maurice will then be able to allow me. Who knows but that her equipage may be mine some day. No man, least of all Maurice, will look upon such a woman with anything but disgust, and he will love me all the more by contrast."

The great fat sides of Paris shook with good-humoured laughter no longer, for a new story was afloat on the Boulevards which was breathed with respect. It was the talk of the *cafés*, and burst into one uncontrollable cataract in the Faubourg St. Germain. That incarnation of respectability, that being in whose mind and body the ten commandments are incorporated, the *hausfrau*, plumed her wings and glanced unutterable virtue at her lord and master; for the story now circulating throughout Paris showed virtue triumphant and vice just nowhere at all. One bright morning in June, the three modern graces,

Decency, Decorum, and Respectability, putting to flight Frivolity and Licence, pervaded Paris with the smell of orange blossoms, and no one laughed now, for the prodigal had been reclaimed, the young Duc Maurice de Dumaresque led to the altar of La Madeleine the Princess Marie de Xendoff, of Moscow. The old Duc was highly elated, no thing was missing from his cup of happiness save one, and that was his blue Dresden shepherd boy. When his son and his bride stepped into the ducal carriage that was to drive them to the station, he turned to Maurice's aquiline-nosed *belle-mère*, and said with a sigh, "Such a boy, madame. There is no finer one in the whole world." Whether he alluded to his son or the china figure it is difficult to say.

Two months elapsed, and the Duc Maurice and his wife returned to Paris. A magnificent hôtel had been prepared for their reception by the old Duc and the bride's mother. The latter was a widow, and the two got on together charmingly. Madame opened the flood-gates of her maternal bosom to M. le Duc; M. le Duc on his part became equally expansive. Her husband had died of heart disease brought on by excesses, and there were germs of the dread ailment in her "adored Marie," who from her childhood had been left to the care of well-paid strangers, and only caught glimpses now and again of the woman whom nature had given her as mother. Marie de Xendoff, in the midst of wild

surroundings, grew up like a pure white flower in a garden of poisonous shrubs, perfectly untainted. An oratory had been fitted up for her in her new abode. Her eyes brightened at this; she looked forward to many a devout hour to be spent there with her priestly adviser, away from every worldly thought. She had heard her husband's sighs during the *lune de miel*, and with a woman's quick perception guessed they were uttered in impatience of her. She had been trained to perfect obedience, trained to marry, in fact, without other aim or ambition in her heart, save to keep a big establishment. The tall, fragile creature with pale face and haunting eyes was presently conscious of something pulling at the casket, which had remained closed since her birth—in a word, her heart was opening to her husband, and he was merely courteous and polite to her. She had not heard one word of endearment since the day of her marriage. It was always "Madame" or "Marie," and she ended by envying the bourgeois terms of endearment which she heard the blue-bloused mechanic address to his wife. As for Maurice, he yawned from morning till night, and was wearied beyond endurance, save when reading the passionate but illiterate love-letters of Diane de Florian. He had no qualms about going to see her. "My wife knows perfectly well the marriage was arranged," he said to himself. "She is at liberty to do everything she likes, she will not attempt to

interfere with me." The old Duc showed his appreciation of his son's obedience by putting a large sum of money at his disposal. Although everything was so respectable and decent and right, Diane de Florian was now possessed of an equipage whose high-stepping horses and glittering harness were the envy and admiration of the Bois de Boulogne. No more picture painting now. The young Duc showed his appreciation of the charms of Diane de Florian by loading her with extravagant gifts. She became fat and rosy with affluence, that affluence which made his wife so pale, so sad, so prayerful. "She has absolutely no feeling at all, except for her rosaries and crucifixes," he thought, scornfully.

It so happened that he was destined to find that the blood which he thought coursed so languidly through his wife's veins could sweep on in great rapid gushes, and that he, accustomed to a woman of the lowest classes, who gave herself up thoughtlessly to every whim and passion of the moment for sordid and interested motives, knew little or nothing of the great nobility of suffering, that suffering which is severest because it is quietly borne. Maurice, returning to his house at a late hour, walked slowly upstairs to his own apartments, and in doing so he passed his wife's oratory. A vague curiosity impelled him to glance in. In the first place, he wondered if his wife in her delicate health was still up; in the second, the idea

occurred to him that candles, even if holy, had a way of being able to burn other things than their own wicks. He opened the door so quietly that the inmate of the oratory was not disturbed. Two tall candles threw a light over part of the altar; the rest of the place was in gloom. Kneeling before a crucifix on her *prie-Dieu*, with her long black hair hanging in wild confusion round her, was Marie de Dumaresque. He had never thought her pretty, but now he was struck with the ivory whiteness of her skin, the brilliance of her eyes on whose lashes tears still hung, and whose mournful beauty the candles heightened. Compared to that other woman he had never even admired her form. But now, robed in the voluminous folds of a loose silky grey gown, he thought her picturesque and extraordinary. The air was redolent and heavy with the sickly scent of incense; it seemed as though her person and not the pastilles exhaled this odour of sanctity. This, the princess's favourite apartment, was devoid of frippery. Maurice noted this, and then another picture rose up: that of the courtesan bred in a garret once starved and beaten whose walls were now hung with satin, whose ceilings were frescoed, and who considered no luxury or finery half good or half fine enough for her person. Pah! that eternal smell of violets! The presence of those creatures was always heralded by it, even as brimstone is supposed to foretell the devil. So

thought Maurice. Coming from the embraces of his venal love, the terrible life of this pure and innocent woman affected him. Her lips were moving in prayer, the earnestness and sincerity of which caused him to remain transfixed on the threshold.

"Merciful Father," she prayed, "Prostrate in spirit and flesh at the foot of Thy holy altar, I humbly beseech Thee to remember Thy lowly daughter. With the whole strength of my awakened soul, I entreat a return for that love which I have given to my husband. Whilst adoring thee, O God! I am yet a woman. Nor is it for myself alone that I plead. Who will there be to love our child unborn, but my weakly self?"

Despair seized her, and she sobbed with the bitterness of one who knows and feels herself alone.

"Marie!"

The husk of frivolity which the young Duc had worn all his life fell from him like the discarded mantle of Elijah when he ascended into heaven. Quivering with new-born sensations, ashamed of his past life, he confronted his wife whilst she still knelt on her *prie-Dieu*, no longer in an attitude of prayer, but in one of wonder, which gradually gave way to delighted surprise.

Presently she muttered, confusedly, "I thought you were out; I did not know——"

The tall candles appeared to Maurice like ghastly spectres wrapped in shrouds, and their light seemed to

wane and the darkness deepen. The only prominent things were the crucifix, an image of the Virgin, and the pure white face of the living Marie.

"Listen to me," he said, in grave tones. "You know I have hitherto wronged you by my coldness and neglect. I will not confess the reason now, but will, if you wish, at some future time."

She kept very still, did Marie, but her gaze was fixed on his face.

He approached the little altar, and struck at it with his clenched hand.

"I vow before this monument of your idolatry," he continued, "that I forego my past life and begin anew. Nay, more; I swear by my own manhood that I shall never know happiness until I have secured yours. I will be your husband and your protector, my poor Marie. I proclaim myself, as long as my breath lasts, your devoted lover."

The princess had risen to her feet. Her cheeks burning, her eyes ablaze with a new light, she knelt on the bare floor, and pressed his hand to her lips.

"Maurice! Oh, thank God! oh, thank God! oh, thank God!" In the midst of her love for the man, her thoughts were yet of heaven.

He raised her, moved to deep emotion at seeing her, so nobly born, at his feet, and clasped her fragile form gently in his arms.

And it thus came about that in that, the only lowly

room in the great mansion, lighted by two miserable candles, the flesh embraced the spirit, and worshipped it as it had never done before.

Radiant with their new-found happiness, they walked soon afterwards to their own apartments. At the door of her room she hesitated.

Was he going to enter ?

"I am not worthy, beloved," he murmured, and, kissing her hand almost reverently, he left her on the threshold. From that time forward the young princess was lonely no longer. Maurice, true to his vow, so strangely taken, became her constant companion. The bright spirit of his young wife charmed him infinitely more than the sensuality of the other woman. He wondered how he could ever have cared for Diane de Florian when he watched the almost feline grace of the Russian princess, in her semi-Oriental gowns, which were always so graceful in their draping. How could he ever have listened to the maddening platitudes of that ignorant, coarse, and uneducated woman, while this graceful and gifted creature was ready to please him always.

She was well and deeply read, thanks to her instructors, and conversed on most subjects with a real, and not superficial, knowledge of them. Her world of interest was so large that petty spite and scandal found no place there.

If Maurice had any fault to find, it was only in her

adhesion to prayer, forgetting that it was the latter that first showed him the quality of his wife. Under the benign influence of love the Princess Marie became beautiful, but it was the beauty born of thought and suffering. When a few months had passed the old Duc de Dumaesque received a telegram whilst at dinner. The reading of it caused him infinite gladness. He rose to his feet and addressed his guests, his voice shaken with a pleased emotion.

"My friends, I have to announce to you the birth of a son to the house of Dumaesque. My son has an heir," he added, falteringly; "I—I am a grandfather. *Mille tonnerres!* I feel I can forgive my boy Maurice everything and anything; yes, even having given away my blue Dresden boy to that she-devil of a Florian, who won't return it!"

The great fat sides of Paris were bowed in wonder and admiration. The report flowed along the Boulevards into the *cafés*, falling with a splash of voices into boudoirs of the ladies of the *haute volée*. The Duchesse de Dumaesque had preserved the continuity of the Dumaesques. It was a noble deed surely, and one that filled the whole of respectable Paris with pride and exultation. Meanwhile, Diane de Florian loved Maurice Dumaesque in her way—that is to say, as much as her vanity and self-love would permit. When her equipage passed that of the Princess Marie the first time she took an airing in the Bois with her little

son and nurse, Diane de Florian was at first scornful, and then furious. "*Hein ! le bon cultivateur,*" she said.

That night she wrote a pressing, albeit ill-spelt, note to Maurice, entreating him to visit her. She bade the messenger wait for an answer. He returned bearing a note, addressed in the well-known handwriting. With tumultuous feelings, unusual in her, she tore the envelope open, and out rolled a bundle of bank-notes. Like Cleopatra, turning on the messenger who brought her news of the marriage of Antony to Octavia, she flew at the unhappy man and struck him in the face. This feat cost her a thousand francs at the *tribunal de justice*. But she cared little for this. If he had but come himself.

She wrote again, and yet again, but each time he sent her money without a word of recognition. Her rage knew no bounds. She stormed into convulsive anger that bleared her eyes and made her face sallow, and then she became silent and pale, but determined on revenge. She thought at first that he need only see her to love her again ; but afterwards a nameless something in her breast assured her that Maurice thought no more of her than most men think of the amours that are passed, without affection, without respect, without sympathy.

One afternoon, when the Princess Marie had crooned her little son to sleep, for no hireling hands

were allowed to do for him the duties that this young mother so naturally and cheerfully undertook, she went, as was her wont, to her little oratory to thank her Maker for the gifts He had bestowed upon her. Once again, as she had done so many times before, she knelt down in that bare room, worshipping and weeping. Her heart was full to overflowing, and the sobs that broke from her, like imprisoned birds, were those of joy and gratitude. In her exultation she fancied she detected life in the graven images on the altar. They seemed to smile on her, as with her loving, sinless soul, she consecrated the life of her child, her adoration, and herself to them. Life, so empty, vapid, and aimless before, was now full of colour, love, and hope. But to no one is given joy undiluted. In the midst of her pent-up enthusiasm, the princess became conscious of another person in her oratory. She knew it was not Maurice ere she looked up. It was a stranger; a woman magnificently habited, and of fine proportions. She rose instantly, annoyed at the interruption.

“Did not my servants tell you, madame, that I never admit strangers into my oratory?”

“I am to blame!” answered her visitor. “I found my way here without being shown, and without permission. I wished to see you, or M. le Duc.”

The princess lowered her head slightly. “I must ask you, then, to follow me into a more fitting place for conversation,” she made answer.

"This place will do as well as any other," replied the visitor, half contemptuously, without attempting to follow the princess.

A strong perfume of violets pervaded the atmosphere. The battle with the incense—between the holy and the unholy perfumes—presaged the one of words.

"Who are you?" cried the young wife, recoiling towards the altar as if to seek refuge there from the burning look of hatred directed towards her.

"I am," replied the other—"I am what men have made me."

"What do you want of me?" faltered the princess, half guessing the character of the woman before her.

"You have stolen my lover," was the fierce answer.

"I—your lover?" repeated the other woman.
"I am the Duchesse Marie de Dumaesque."

"I know, but that does not prevent Maurice de Dumaesque being my lover all the same."

"It is false," answered the princess with a wildly beating heart. "He may have been once—long, long since. He is mine, mine, mine now."

"Do you fancy he is yours because you married him, you poor fool?" demanded Diane de Florian.

"Why do you come here?" cried the princess, hoarsely. "Here in my house. Why are such as you in the world at all?"

"I am here to see Maurice de Dumaesque. And

such as I are in the world," responded the other woman, with almost savage bitterness, "that it should also be possible to such women as you."

"But my husband," insisted the princess—"you have many lovers, what is one more or less to you——"

"Bah!" interrupted Diane. "You virtuous women! Your souls are too narrow, your hearts are too contracted, to love more than one. Bon Dieu! why ascribe to virtue that which, after all, is only want of capacity!"

"But Maurice loves me," repeated the princess again, with almost childish persistency. "He loves no one else in the wide world. Look you, madame, he has told me so. Nay, more, he swore it at this altar of mine," and she caressed it with her little hand.

Diane's asperity was lessened. The simplicity of her rival brought a smile to her lips.

"You believe all he says, do you?"

"Implicitly!"

"Belief has ruined more women than worldly knowledge," quoth Diane. "Here, read this letter, one of the many he has written to me."

She unfastened two or three diamond buttons at her bosom, and triumphantly dragged from a nest of lace a crumpled letter which had been hastily thrust there. The princess leant for support on her *prie-Dieu*, and stretched out one hand for the letter, which her visitor handed her. She glanced greedily at it.

It was true then. Her new-found happiness had vanished, and the memory of it already tortured her. The recollection of it would be as a hell from which she could never escape. The handwriting was his; the very expressions of love with which he had addressed her, and which she thought had been inspired by her, had first been written and spoken to this woman. The colour faded away from her lips and face as she read on. Not only did the letter breathe vows of an untamed burning and mad love, but it was full of voluptuous sensualism such as the young woman had never dreamed, heard, or read of before. Clots of blood seemed to dance in front of her eyes, and she raised them for help to the image of the Christ. It appeared as though blood was streaming from His wounds in pity for her sufferings. She uttered a terrible cry, in which physical and mental agony seemed to fight for supremacy. She swayed and groped blindly before her, then she fell forward, face downward, to the ground. The motion of her already diseased heart was suspended, the shock was greater than the sensitive, delicate woman could bear. At the foot of her beloved altar, the spirit of the princess winged its flight to the unknown world. When Maurice de Dumaesque entered the oratory in search of his wife, he found the living and the dead together. The scent of the incense and the violets was stifling.

“Woman!” he cried hoarsely, divining the truth,

and seizing with murderous grip the living and triumphant flesh before him, "this is your work!"

"Man!" she retorted, with indescribable tragedy, and as though she were the spokeswoman for the whole of her tribe, "I, and such as I, are yours!"

Which was illogical. But it stayed the hand of Maurice de Dumaesque.



Trial by Faith.

“**H**OW petulant you are, Eugenie!” exclaimed the Baroness Chaufoi reprovingly to her pretty daughter, who was bent on teasing her soldier lover in that utterly bewildering fashion peculiar to engaged girls. “When you have thoroughly offended the Colonel you will be sorry.”

“No, I won’t, mother,” answered the girl. “He looks so glum to-day, that really he might pose as a picture for Alceste in ‘Le Misanthrope.’”

“Hush, child,” remonstrated the elderly aristocratic lady. “It promises little for your future happiness if you intend pursuing your present course of teasing.”

The young Colonel smiled. The mention of his approaching marriage with the fair-haired Eugenie always pleased him.

“She will be kinder to me when we are married,” he said.

“Married!” repeated Eugenie. “Not so fast, monsieur, please. I’ll think about it.”

“But the lovely gifts of jewellery and lace, what will you do with them?” asked her mother, laughingly.

“I will wear them at balls and dinners. One need not marry merely to wear fine things.”

"You naughty girl! Are those the principles you learnt at school? They do not sound as if they were taken from a copy-book, certainly," observed the Baroness, good-humouredly. "But why do you tease the Colonel so? Come, confess, what has he done?"

"Rather ask what he has *not* done, mother," answered Eugenie, with an enchanting pout. "Every girl I know who has been, and is, engaged, has received poetry from her lover. He has never written so much as a line to me, and he writes so well. Charles," she added, addressing the Colonel, "you have promised me a story of which I was to be the heroine for the last three months, and you keep on putting me off by saying to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow again, and yet I have not seen the story. I am tired of the silly to-morrows. What have you to say for yourself, monsieur?"

The Colonel was silent. Eugenie extended her pretty hand.

"Come, be good friends, don't be cross any more, dear Charles, and I won't tease you."

She went to him, and brushed his brown hair from his forehead.

"Ah! what a scar, where did you get that?" she cried, pityingly.

"In the battle of Austerlitz."

"Those hateful Russians! How you must have suffered!"

"It did not hurt so very much. It was an Austrian sabre stroke. There are some wounds that pain infinitely more."

"My friend! You are indeed gallant to-day! But give me your hand, and I will feel your pulse."

"Dearest little Eugenie, we soldiers are inured to all kinds of hardships. To success and defeat alike. But you—you, my heart, I could not lose."

"Dearest Charles, we will love each other ever and always, and even in the grave we shall lie side by side."

"Yes," whispered the Colonel, softly. "Love me for what I am, not for some imagined thing that I might be and am not. I love you so much that I fear to tell you how much. I have no memory of its birth, for it seems to have been with me always, and there can be no end save death."

"Well, you two, are you friends again?" enquired the Baroness, who had all this time held discreetly aloof.

"Aye! so much so, madame," cried the Colonel, "that I intend demonstrating by deeds in support of my words how sorry I am to have vexed Eugenie."

He took a manuscript from his breast pocket, and gave it to Eugenie.

"Here is your story," he said.

The young girl laughed delightedly. "Stop a minute," she cried. "Now I see all. You were

thoughtful and solemn before just to surprise me like this. What a deceiver you are. But this story," she added, unfolding the manuscript—"it has no title. What is it called?"

"As you like it!" responded the Colonel.

"That won't do. The title has been used by Shakespeare. Never mind, read it to us, Charles, and as for you, René"—this to a tall fellow in a captain's uniform who had just entered the room—"sit down, and keep quiet—if you can."

The handsome officer, whose spurred boots clanked on the polished floor, sat down by the Baroness, whose chair had been drawn near to the table, and Eugenie and Charles were not slow in following suit.

The Colonel shaded his eyes with one hand, as with the other he held the paper in front of him. Softly he read :

"Peace after the turmoils of war and hardships."

"You must read louder," cried Eugenie.

"The war was at an end," continued the Colonel, reading in a louder voice. "The trumpets' death-calling clangour had ceased, the banners and standards were lowered, and the cannons' fell work was over, leaving the earth sullied and trampled with the blood of the brave."

"Halt!" cried Captain René. "Halt, O future brother of mine, I know the whole story already. Now comes a romantic wood, a bit of ethereal blue sky,

got up, as laundresses would say, for the occasion, and a particularly green tree, under which Reginald de Montmorenci is sighing or cursing."

"Be quiet, René," expostulated Eugenie, laughingly.

"All right, Eugenie," responded the irrepressible one, "I'll try to listen quietly. But you notice if I am not right. Go ahead, old fellow. You were at the place where Reginald is either sighing or cursing!"

The Colonel read on :

"It was in spring, when all the world awakes to hope and love, that David and Marie walked the terrace of the park from which they could see all the beauties of nature unfold themselves. From this point, too, they could see the guests who had been invited to celebrate David's birthday. The young man had just recovered from a dangerous illness, thanks to the careful nursing received from the hands of strangers.

"The privations of war, a wound received in action, had caused his illness, but when he rose from his bed of sickness love and spring smiled upon him. Marie, the lovely daughter of his unknown host, on the first day of his convalescence had given him a glass of wine. Her hand trembled, and her eyes were cast down as she did so, and his heart was touched with infinite gratitude for her sympathy. Love stole in these two young hearts, and bound them together

with garlands of spring roses. The knowledge of the affection existing between the young people was not unpleasant to Marie's parents, for David held a post as secretary and aide-de-camp to a field marshal, who looked upon him with the same favour as Napoleon I. did on Eugène de Beauharnais. His lot was cast in pleasant places, and the hand of Marie was promised him. The lovers sat on a moss-covered bank on the terrace. David told her how in his fever he saw an angel in cerulean blue robes weep for him. Marie told him of her fears and anxiety on his behalf. So the hours of Paradise sped like the summer wind. The sun was sinking, and the evening air became cooler, and Marie gave her arm to her lover, for he was still weak, and led him from the terrace. When Marie and David appeared they were surrounded by friends who congratulated them, and the air resounded with praises of the heroic conduct of David in the war. When these acclamations were at their loudest, a woman, strangely dressed and jewelled, pressed her way through the throng. David immediately espied her, and rushed to her embrace, crying—

“ ‘ My mother, my beloved mother ! ’

“ The woman wept on his shoulder.

“ ‘ David, my son ; oh, my son ! oh, my son ! ’ was her answer. Presently she recovered herself somewhat, and broke out into thanksgiving.

“ ‘Thanks be to God that you are safe and well. Now I will die in peace. As soon as I received the letter from your doctor saying there was no room for hope I hurried to your side, and now the Merciful God has brought you well and safe to my arms.’

“ ‘Dear mother!’

“ ‘But I scarcely recognise you,’ continued the good woman. ‘How you have changed! How tall you are grown, and how handsome. Your father always said while he lived that you would turn out an honour and a blessing to us. Ah! you have an order! But, my son, you must not wear that. . . .’

“ ‘Darling little mother’—and David smiled through his tears—‘it is not a cross, it is a star. I am no apostate.’

“ ‘Yes, it is true!’ said his mother. ‘How splendid it is! How beautifully it sparkles! You will lose it unless you have it sewn on firmly.’

“ ‘The guests drew away to a respectful distance, and Marie, who had watched the scene with bated breath, hastened forward, and said between her sobs:

“ ‘You inconstant man! You have betrayed me. You love another.’

“ ‘Marie’s father approached David, and said wrathfully, ‘So, poltroon, you have dared to engage yourself to my daughter whilst you have had a *liaison* with this Jewish woman.’

“ ‘David, with flaming cheeks and flashing eyes, and

with stern purpose underlying his deliberate utterance, said, 'She is my mother!'

A cry from the Baroness de Chaufoi brought the Colonel's story to an abrupt conclusion. Eugenie and her brother sprang up in consternation, and ran to the help of their mother, who motioned them aside.

"What is it, mother?" they both asked at once.

"Nothing, children," answered the Baroness, recovering herself. "Be seated."

Reassured they sat down again.

"Didn't Marie's parents know that David was a Jew?" asked Eugenie, after a pause.

"We'll hear that to-morrow," answered the Colonel.

"Always to-morrow!" pouted Eugenie.

"That's an uncanny story," remarked the Captain. "The marriage is out of the question, and my Reginald, who is sitting all this while under the green tree, is a confounded Israelite. I must ask the Senate if Jews are permitted to fall in love."

"It is a true and sad story," laughed the Colonel.

"What would you do, madame, if such an unfortunate thing happened to your daughter?"

The Baroness bent to pick up her pocket-handkerchief which had fallen, but did not answer.

"And you, René, what would you do?"

"Ten thousand devils!" shouted the Captain, stamping his spurred foot furiously. "If any confounded Jew ever played those tricks here I would throw the blackguard out of the window."

"And you, and you, dear Eugenie?" asked the Colonel, whose voice had become quite husky, "what would you do?"

Eugenie rose, and made a deep reverence as she had done before the Empress Josephine at the Tuileries.

"You are polite," she answered. "How could you ask me, Charles, if I would marry a hook-nosed, black-haired usurious horror of a Jew?"

"But there are fair Jews," corrected the Colonel.

"It is very hard after one has been engaged, after one has kissed, to be parted, but I don't see how anything else could be."

"Then you would send the lover away, as he was a Jew?"

"Nothing else could be done," replied Eugenie. "Your Marie in the story cannot marry a Jew and maintain her position in Christian society. But she must be careful how she sends him away. This, I think, would not be a bad way. She should say, 'Look here, Monsieur Isaacs—mother, are not all Jews called Isaacs? You don't know, very well—Dear Monsieur Isaacs, it is true that I loved you—God knows how it came about, but I was always a giddy girl—but do please leave me, as we can never marry. Don't be cross, dear Monsieur Isaacs. Look here, I will make you a present of all my lovely diamonds and laces, which are worth thousands of pounds, and which

you can sell and make a profit on, but give me back my promise ! ”

“ Take it ! ” said the Colonel, hoarsely. And he left her for ever.



The Woman in the House.

THE sick woman lay on a bed of down in a darkened room. Ever and anon a faint sigh of pain, or possibly of impatience, escaped her lips, and her little hand drummed nervously on the silk coverlet. Not far removed from her was a diminutive bed draped with lace and festooned gaily with cerulean bows.

It was the bunting hung out to welcome a distinguished stranger, which that same stranger heeded in a fashion peculiar to all illustrious new-comers when they visit a new country—that is, not at all.

If the language of the tiny piece of humanity encased in fine linen could have been understood at times—that is, if his rebellious cries could have been translated—it would have appeared that he strangely objected to his entrance into life at all, and that his delicate surroundings gave him no real happiness. The child was a philosopher. The mother was merely a woman; and to the restless movements of her first-born she murmured gently in the new voice born of suffering and motherhood, “Hush, darling!”

Presently the bedroom door opened very softly, and in the dim light—if light it could be called—a masculine form presented itself.

"Derrick, dear," said the voice from the bed, "is that you?" The little hand ceased from drumming, the rising sigh was stifled, Derrick Hartridge had come, and the sick woman was happy. The husband bent and kissed her, asking how she fared.

"Better," she answered, "much better; I am not suffering a bit now."

The Recording Angel, ready to write down every falsehood told by poor humanity, found himself stopped as he would have jotted down the name of the sick woman in his book of lies. The Angel of Mercy, with outstretched fingers, pointed out to him that a misstatement told for the benefit of others, and not for self, counted more for righteousness than cold-blooded and injurious truth. So the Recording Angel let it pass.

"It is very dark, Edith, shall I draw the curtains?" observed Derrick Hartridge, seating himself on the edge of the bed. "Will it hurt your eyes if I let the light come in?"

"No, dear," she replied, "I love the light; it won't hurt my eyes a bit."

Once more the Angel of Mercy had to intercede with the Recording Angel, lest the latter might assign to her a prominent place in the list of the unveracious.

Derrick Hartridge arose and gently drew aside one of the rich heavy curtains that screened the light of a fresh beautiful June morning from the room. Beneath

the heavy curtains were others of lace, and through them streamed the radiant sunshine on to the pallid face of the sick woman and the now sleeping infant.

Derrick Hartridge, opulent, strong, and handsome, looked at his wife. She had closed her eyes involuntarily, the light was too strong for her aching head, and the heavy blue lids hid away the violet depths of her eyes. Her face was grey and ghastly in its pallor, the small mouth was drawn, and its colour gone. Never very round, her countenance had become thin and haggard, and he could plainly discern lines where he knew dimples were once only to be seen. Her beautiful golden brown hair had been dishevelled by the ugly hand of physical pain, and the cold sweats in which she was almost bathed drew out every curl and ripple, so that it now hung lank and straight like that of a drowned woman. The crisp little locks he admired so were gone; in their stead, wisps of hair, damp and straight, stood out uncompromisingly and ugly.

"Poor girl, poor girl," he murmured, pityingly. Yet the sympathy was not so much for a woman in her pain as for the loss of her charming and fresh beauty. How different it was now from what it had been! As in a dream the past two years rose before him. Edith Barclay had been a charming concert singer; he had married her from the platform, where her sweet young voice, her pretty talent, and charming presence had made her beloved by many. In wedding Derrick

Hartridge her relations considered she had done a good thing. She thought so, too, but with this difference—they thought of his position, and she of her love. Merely a woman, whom public esteem and admiration only rendered more lovable.

“Poor girl, poor girl,” murmured Hartridge again. He remembered her flushed and radiant, bowing to a delighted audience, and he saw her now pallid, miserable, and weak, a ghost of two years ago. He leaned over the festooned cot, and looked at his little son; then suddenly his heart warmed in a strange way towards the sick woman. His thoughts at the moment affected him strangely, and he took up the little mottled hand and kissed it softly. The mother smiled as she saw this, and a pleased look stole over her face.

“You must go downstairs,” she said, almost mischievously, “and have some breakfast; Vernon will give it you, as I cannot.”

“Oh! hang the girl,” muttered Hartridge.

“For shame, you naughty fellow,” said his little wife, reprovingly. She knew there was no love lost between her husband and her own sister, but the latter had come to “take care of the house” during the period of Mrs. Hartridge’s travail. Now if “taking care of a house” and the domestic arrangements consisted in letting half-a-dozen female domestics and half as many male have and do just whatever they pleased; if dressing in the latest fashion, reading novels which

had to be hidden at the approach of any non-literary person, and driving about in her sister's carriages, represented the fulfilment of that duty, it must be confessed that Vernon Barclay distinguished herself in a most eminent degree. The peculiar name of Vernon had been given to Edith Barclay's sister by parents who rightly despaired of male issue.

At the approach of his wife's nurse—which worthy lady appeared clad in a gown that might have graced part of a nigger's wardrobe, but who had been recommended by a dowager duchess—Derrick Hartridge took himself off downstairs to the breakfast table, at whose head he already found his sister-in-law presiding.

“Good morning,” he said, coldly, giving her a limp hand to shake; but he breathed a sigh of relief all the same. This room was redolent of the scent of flowers and fresh air; the room in which the sick woman lay was heavy with the smell of drugs and eau de Cologne. The other woman who sat at the head of the table, although not in her *première jeunesse*, was fresh of face and neat in attire. Her features were not charming and regular as those of her sister, but a certain attractiveness was upon them, and love had not yet rifled the bloom from the peachy cheeks, nor the lustre from the eyes. Derrick Hartridge was intent upon a leader in the *Times*. His sister-in-law had sat at the head of the table every day for the last two weeks: he noticed her about as

much as his grandmother's old silver coffee urn, and she had hitherto interested him equally little. She held out her hand for his cup.

"Will you have some more coffee, Derrick?" Simple question enough; and he looked up from the article on "Bimetallism," and, as the sun streamed in on the young face of his sister-in-law, he just noticed how prettily the sun played on the crisp, artistically-arranged hair, on the rosy lips and sparkling eyes. God! how cruel, yet—what a contrast to the pale creature upstairs, thought the animal in Derrick Hartridge.

"Yes! I'll have another cup, please."

In handing the cup the two hands accidentally touched.

"I beg your pardon," said Hartridge.

"I beg your pardon," stammered the sister-in-law, blushing furiously. Derrick noticed it.

"Wonder what she did that for," he thought, referring to the rosy hue.

Time went on wearily with the sick woman upstairs; she did not mend apace, but the scrap of humanity for which she almost lost her life throve like a young Titan. He was always yelling for drink, which spoke volumes for the latter, as supplied by a nurse engaged for the occasion, the mother being too delicate to nurse him.

The new-made father would gaze on his son contemptively. "He is a regular Hartridge," he said, "and won't disgrace the race." Whether this applied to his imbibing propensities, or his strength and vigour, did not transpire. It would have done either way. Derrick Hartridge's grandfather and great grandfather — both foxhunting gentlemen — died at about ninety as full of years as of port, for both worthies could stow away a couple of bottles of that wine comfortably after each meal, and without any after-twinges of indigestion. It appears they were dubbed "gentlemen of the old school."

Derrick Hartridge's manner became less and less formal to his sister-in-law. After all, his wife wished that she should be in the house, preside at his meals, see to his comfort; so it was but natural, surely, that two young people thrown together should be friendly, at least, if nothing else. So when one morning Derrick told his wife "that he and Vernon got on better together," what wonder that she was rejoiced, knowing that the two were wont to be none too friendly.

Yet it was curious, too, that she, being so happy and contented on her bed of sickness, should weep thereat, with none but silence and the white pillows as witnesses.

Vernon Barclay, always careful of her personal appearance, especially since her sister's marriage,

surprised Madame X. by the quantity of gowns she ordered, and amazed her still more by her utter recklessness regarding their style, material, and cost.

Visitors to see "poor Mrs. Hartridge" wondered at the beauty of her sister; "she used to be such a quiet little thing," Society thought. So did Derrick Hartridge, whose thoughts were becoming more and more disturbed. She appeared in a new light now. In the morning at breakfast he no longer took up the morning paper to read the latest "prices" or earliest telegrams, but looked instead at her. She was radiant in her morning gowns, resplendent in the plumes borrowed of others. So that one day when she made her appearance in some delicate "creation" looking like an angel, and he had just returned from the room of misery, drugs, and sickness, when he kissed her lover-like in that room below, she felt she had gained what she merited.

It was hard work, that ascent from the chrysalis to the butterfly.

And the sick woman above stairs?

"Isn't my husband late?" she asked of the nurse, who had become attached to her, seeing what a gentle, sweet creature it was, so pretty, so uncomplaining, so strong, despite her weakness and ill health.

"Not a bit, ma'am," the nurse would answer aloud. "Very likely he has to see after some things."

The sick woman would gravely nod her acquiescence,

cogitating that Derrick Hartridge, who never had "to see to things" in his life before, would naturally have to see after things now his wife was ill.

"Isn't it strange, nurse, that Miss Vernon and my husband should nearly always come in together?" remarked the sick woman, puzzling over things, as she hugged her son to her breast.

"Not at all, ma'am," returned the diplomatic nurse, "I suppose they meet at the same houses, when they go a-visiting."

Such testimony was incontestable, and yet—and yet the nurse even, though she was recommended by a dragon in the shape of a certain dowager duchess, had her suspicions, and pitied the sick woman.

One afternoon, when Sir John Barrowny, M.D., had left his patient, she whispered to her nurse, "Sir John says I may go down to-night; you must not tell Mr. Hartridge, I will surprise him at dinner."

"You must not excite yourself, ma'am," the old campaigner said, thoroughly disturbed; "don't come down until you can lean on your husband's arm."

But the ex-songstress fired like a war-horse at the trumpet's blast with the idea of returning to the scenes of her former triumphs, and was not so to be put off. The thought of "appearing" once again, even though the platform was a private one, aroused her.

"I want to see Phœbe," she said.

"But, ma'am, I——" expostulated the nurse.

The mother laid her sleeping son gently on the soft bed. "I will go down, you understand," she observed, in a quiet but determined way—"I will surprise him." "How delighted he will be," she thought to herself, and longed to be once more in his arms, without those pains.

"If you upset yourself, something serious will happen," cried the nurse, alarmed.

"But I won't be upset; it will make me happy," exclaimed the young wife, her face beaming with anticipation.

"That which we hope doesn't often turn out as we think," returned the nurse, like a persistent old Sibyl.

"You're a croaker," laughed the young woman. "Here, take the baby, and tell Phœbe to come to me."

Phœbe came, and the nurse and child left the room. Phœbe was a stiff and formal person, neither old nor young, and used to dress ladies to make them look perfect. Edith Hartridge knew what she was about when she engaged her as maid. Phœbe had been in the service of a couple of Russian princesses, and knew a thing or two about a lady's toilet.

When Phœbe had finished with her young mistress, even she deigned to glance an unqualified approval on what she was graciously pleased to consider her own handiwork.

"*Madame est parfaitement belle,*" she said. Madame was beautiful, and if a touch of rouge lent an

additional charm to her cheeks, if powder heightened the natural white of her complexion, what mattered it? Madame's features were faultless, and in the white loose robe that hung about her lithe figure she looked like a Grecian statue called to life by art. Her mirror told her she was beautiful, and she looked admiringly at herself; not as loving her beauty for its own sake, but as something to offer him, her husband, the father of her son. There was a brightness in her eyes, a colour in her cheeks, that art could not give, as she left her room with the household hushed.

* * *

The other woman sat at the head of the table dressed in black, *décolletée*, jaded and pale. Derrick Hartridge, in evening attire, playing with his food rather than eating it, looked at her every now and again askance. Vernon Barclay glanced at him discontentedly, and he, with a scarcely perceptible shrug of the shoulders, applied himself to the magnum of champagne in front of him. Did she see in him, after the manner of Eve of old, the fruit of knowledge that had best been left untasted; did he see in her the temptress who lured him to the destruction of his principles and conscience? He thought of the sick woman upstairs, and his heart seemed crushed and torn for the sufferings she had endured, for her haggardness—were they not of his making? She was his wife, she had borne him a son, all, all, all for this! A mighty sob rose to the throat

of the man. He could at that moment have knelt down and begged pardon of all the world, and have stabbed himself to death at his wife's feet with the silver table knife he fingered. The revulsion between the sublime and the ridiculous brought him to himself, and he laughed peevishly.

"What is the matter?" asked the woman, suddenly.

"I am not well," returned Hartridge, "I am upset, miserable, anything you like."

"So am I," observed the other woman in the house, "but I don't publish it as you do"—this last with the quiet scorn of the fallen angel.

"The *tu quoque* is hardly applicable," Hartridge said, cynically. "If you don't publish your misery in so many words, you are getting so d——d pale and tragic that everyone is remarking it. If I had but known it."

"You ought to have known it," broke in Vernon, passionately, "it is a miserable excuse that only a coward would give utterance to. You have loved many women; I have never loved but once—you, and you took advantage of it."

"Come," said Derrick Hartridge, brutally, "don't you think you laid yourself out for the advantage, as you call it?" and, as if to give him courage to keep up his insinuations, he drank a tumbler of champagne.

"What was absolute innocence on my part might be translated into pure guilt on yours," observed the

woman. The man did not answer; he could have said many things, but he preferred silence.

"The doctor said Edith may come down soon," Vernon Barclay said presently, breaking an oppressive silence.

"I know," he ejaculated abruptly.

"What is to become of me—of us," pleaded the woman in the house, all her anger forsaking her, "I shall die without you."

"Remain where you are," he answered her between his clenched teeth. "No one need ever know—the truth."

A cry broke the stillness that followed this utterance, and a white and haggard woman tottered in through the curtains that separated the large dining-room from a smaller adjoining one. The touch of rouge on her cheeks made them look ghastlier.

"Edith!" cried out the miserable pair in unison.

But Edith, who had fallen prone, was past all reply—then, and for ever.

